Sri Ranganatha Ashtottara Shatanamavalli

Meaning of each Holy Name with Pastime

(Holy Name 1 - Holy Name 108)

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Holy Name 1: Sri Ranganatha

Mantra: Om Sri Ranganathaya namah

Meaning – One who is the Lord of the stage of this material world

Pastime – One day a stonecutter was working in the goshala (cowshed) of Sri Rangam Ranganatha Swamy Temple. He happened to break a black stone and he found a frog inside alive. It was a great wonder to him. He immediately thought that when God could help a frog even within a stone, why he should also not keep quiet and meditate on Ranganatha without doing any work. He strongly believed that Lord Ranganatha would take care of him. He resigned from the job and started meditating on the banks of the Kaveri River overlooking the sanctum sanctorum of the Srirangam Temple. Lord Ranganatha every night went in disguise and gave him prasadam. He was content and happy and after some time he passed away.

This happened during the lifetime of Ramanujacharya. When the news of the death of the stonecutter was conveyed to the Acharya he simply said that the Lord's task was over and he would no longer carry food to the stone cutter.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sri Ranganatha – One who is the Lord of the stage of this material world," in this case, the stonecutter understood that Lord Ranganatha is the Lord of the stage of this material world, so he completely surrendered to the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha and accordingly Supreme Lord also pleased by his determination in understanding his (Lord Ranganatha's) position as the Lord of this material world and supplied him all the necessities by enacting a pastime as a great actor in the stage of the material world. Not only to him but for all the living entities in the world, Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) is the provider or maintainer being the Lord of the material world.

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Holy Name 2: Devesa

Mantra: Om Devesaya namah

Meaning – One who is the lord and master of the demigods

Pastime – Once a demon named Somukan, who belonged to the demon pedigree obtained many boons by performing rigorous penance. He possessed arrogance and brutality like any other demon. He wanted to bring the three worlds under his control and make the sages and the devas (demigods) serve him in obedience. He controlled the earth and the heaven and made the sages

and the devas his slaves and ordered them to obey him. He even overpowered the rules of Brahma and seized the Veda Mandras from him. Brahma, Devas, and the sages went to Lord Sri Narayana (Vishnu) at Svetadvipa and prayed to him for protecting them by quelling Somukan. Understanding the difficulty of his obedient servants (demigods and sages), Lord Narayana went to fight Somukan. A terrific war broke out between them. Somukan exhausted all his magic tricks and became tired. He feared that Lord Narayana would kill him if he stayed there anymore. He went inside the sea and hide himself. Lord Sri Narayana quelled Somukan by taking the incarnation of 'Mathsya' and retrieved the Vedas. Further, Lord Narayana killed the demon Somukan. The Devas and the Sages became elated and worshipped Lord Sri Narayana, as per the request of demigods and sages, he gave darshan as Lord Sri Ranganatha at Utharangam, later it got the name Adhirangam because it is mentioned that the temple is older than the Lord Ranganathaswamy temple at Srirangam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Devesa – One who is the lord and master of the demigods."

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Holy Name 3: Sri Ranga Brahma Samjnaka

Mantra: Om Sri Ranga Brahma Samjnakaya namah

Meaning – One who is seen as Lord Sri Ranga by Brahma

Pastime – Once the glittering Sri Ranga Vimana sprang as a result of the tapas (penances) of Brahma in the depths of the Milky ocean, carried by celestial bird Garuda with Adisesha spreading his hood over it, Vishvaksena, the Archangel-in-chief walking in front clearing the way., Sun and Moon fanning the Deity, celestial Musicians Narada and Thumburu following singing Lord's Glory, Rudra and other gods raising the "Jayaghosha" and the celestial maids dancing. There was a rain of flowers. Awakened from his deep tapas, Brahma prostrated before the Vimana and recited the four Vedas. Then Brahma found the Supreme Lord resting with his Consorts in the vimana. The Lord informed Brahma that he had come as a Svayamvyakta -- on his own volition -- as a deity and directed Brahma to worship him strictly according to the procedure for worship laid down in the Agamas and rested in his characteristic posture of Yoga Nidra (Sri Ranga). Brahma carried the vimana to Satyaloka and installed it on the banks of the river, Viraja. After him, Vaivasvata Manu continued the worship.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sri Ranga Brahma Samjnaka – One who is seen as Lord Sri Ranga by Brahma."

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Holy Name 4: Sesha Paryanga Sayana

Mantra: Om Sesha Paryanga Sayanaya namah

Meaning – One who sleeps or reclines on the bed of Adhi Sesha

Pastime – Once two demons named Madhu and Kaitabha tried to kidnap Sridevi and Bhoodevi, from Vaikuntam. Scared, the two devis hid themselves in the chest and at the feet of Lord Vishnu. Without disturbing Lord Vishnu, Adiseshan spewed venom on the demons and drove them away. But he was worried that he

acted without the Lord's permission. Lord Vishnu, however, appreciated Adiseshan's deed and blessed him.

The Brahmanda Purana mentions this legend and further mentions that, after this incident, once, Adishesha, the serpent-mount of Vishnu, wanted to convert his guna (quality) from tamas (darkness) to sattvic (purity). In other words, to purify himself for his independent act, he performed penance at the place of the present Thirumeyam temple via the netherworld on a path, which went on to become the river Pamapar. Vishnu appeared to him in the form of Hayagriva and granted him a boon and pacified him further for his acts. To denote this incident, Lord Vishnu took reclined on him in the same place, which got the name Thirumeyam temple of Tamil Nadu, Adiseshan is depicted with a shrunken hood and a scared look on his face. The Lord's depiction in reclining posture as Tirumeyyar clearly shows Madhu and Kaitabha running away. It is believed that while the Srirangam temple has been in existence for 64 caturyugas (one catur yuga = one each of Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga), this temple has been around for 96 chaturyugas. As it is considered older, this temple is sometimes also referred to as the Adi Rangam temple.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sesha Paryanga Sayana – One who sleeps or reclines on the bed of Adhi Sesha," whichever place Lord Ranganatha reclines, Adisesha acts as his bed and Lord peacefully sleeps on him either it may be Thirumeyam or Sri Rangam or any other holy abode.

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Holy Name 5: Sri Nivasa Bujanthara

Mantra: Om Sri Nivasa Bujantharaya namah

Meaning – On one whose chest Goddess Lakshmi resides

Pastime – In the oldest Tamil literature known as Silapadikaram, describes Sri Rangam temple as follows:

ayiram virittelu talaiyutai aruntirar
payar pallip palartolu tetta
viritiraik kaviri viyanperu turuttittiruvamar
marpan kitanta vannamum

Meaning: On a magnificent cot (Adishesha) having a thousand heads spread out, worshipped and praised by many, on an island surrounded by the river Kaveri with her roaring waves, is the reclining pose of the Lord, who has Lakshmi adorned on his chest.

Once, while Durvasa Muni was walking along a road, he saw Lord Indra riding on the back of his white elephant, Airavata. Sage Durvasa gladly presented Lord Indra with a flower garland. Lord Indra being very prideful, instead of appreciatively placing it over his neck, just hung it on the trunk of his elephant. The elephant being an animal could not understand the value of the garland. So, he threw the garland and stomped on it. Sage Durvasa felt offended and immediately cursed Indra to lose all his power and wealth. In due course, Lord Indra lost all his wealth and in the battle against the demons, many of the demigods were killed.

Since Lord Indra and the demigods were in worse condition, they asked Lord Brahma for help. Lord Brahma suggested that they take shelter in Lord Vishnu. As such, everyone went to the Ocean of Milk situated on the island of Svetadvipa where Lord Vishnu resides. Though the Lord Brahma and the demigods couldn't see Lord Vishnu, they worshiped Him with beautiful prayers and begged that Lord Vishnu be pleased with them.

Lord Vishnu pleased with their prayers, appeared in front of them in four-handed form holding a disc, conch shell, lotus flower, and a club. Lord Vishnu said to the demigods that they should churn the milk ocean to get the nectar, which would make them immortal, but with the help of the demons. Hearing from the Lord, the demigods went to King Bali, the leader of demons, and asked for help from the demons. Understanding that the demigods were willing to share the nectar, King Bali agreed to their proposal of churning the milk ocean.

Following the Lord's instructions, the demigods and the demons went to the base of the golden Mount Mandara. They lifted the mountain and carried it toward the ocean. As it was so heavy, everyone became so tired, they lost their grip and the mountain fell many of the demigods and demons were crushed to death and so many were injured. They prayed to the Lord to help them. The Lord instantly came on His carrier Garuda and revived all of them just with His compassionate glance. They praised the Lord for His miraculous deed. Then the Lord raised the mountain with one hand and placed it on Garuda's back and carried and lowered the mountain into the Ocean of Milk.

After the mountain was in place, they asked Vasuki, the giant thousand-headed serpent, to help in churning. Vasuki agreed and coiled around the mountain ready for churning. The demons protested when the demigods went to hold the head of the serpent. Under the Lord's instructions, the demigods agreed to hold the tail end of Vasuki and the demons held the head of Vasuki. The demons were satisfied as the demigods gave what they wanted, they both started churning but, as the mountain didn't have any base, it fell into the ocean. They again prayed to the Lord to help them. The Lord assumed the form of a giant tortoise known as Kurma and dove into the milk and lifted the mountain onto His shell and raised it above the surface. The demigods and the demons happily started to churn again with much enthusiasm. As the mountain was unbalanced on top, the Lord manifested with one-thousand arms and kept Mandara mountain firmly fixed with His hands.

As they were churning intensively, the first thing that came out of the ocean was not the nectar but the poison from Vasuki. The demons and demigods were so tired and were coughing from the poison. So, the Lord suggested getting help from Lord Shiva. Hearing and pleased with the demigods' and demons' prayers, Lord Shiva came to help and started drinking the poison. Mother Parvathi fearing for Lord Shiva grabbed his neck to stop the poison from entering his body and it caused a bluish line to appear on Lord shiva's neck. As soon as the ocean became free of poison, the demigods and demons resumed churning vigorously. After a while, various items came to the ocean's surface, a Surabhi cow, a white horse, Parijata flowers, Apsaras, Goddess Varuni, Airavata (white elephant), eight males, and female elephants, and sparkling jewels such as Kaustubha and Padmaraga but still there was no nectar. So they continued churning, then appeared from Milk Ocean the Goddess Lakshmi holding a Lotus flower garland in her hand. Demigods and Demons eagerly wait thinking that, she will come and place the garland on their necks, But, For Goddess Lakshmi, all the demons and

demigods appeared to her as “Prakurti – Female” and in a corner away from the crowd, Lord Vishnu is standing with no interest to compete with Demigods and Demons, when Goddess Lakshmi saw Lord Vishnu, immediately she understood that, “He is the only Purusha and her husband,” and without any hesitation amidst of all demigods and demons, Goddess Lakshmi walked towards Lord Vishnu a placed the lotus garland on his neck and married him. Further, Lord Vishnu gave her the place on his chest or Vaksha-Sthalam, which is Goddess Lakshmi’s eternal resting place known as Srivatsa, where Goddess Lakshmi immediately took her residence. Later, whatever the incarnation Lord accepted, Goddess Lakshmi stayed there whether it is Brahmachari form, Sanyasi form, Boar form, Lila avatars like Krishna, etc… any form Goddess present, once Sage Bhirgu kicks Lord on that Vaksha-Sthalam, where she resides, due to which entire episode of Srinivasa Kalyana occurred. Further, in the Kurukshetra war, Krishna to save his devotee Arjuna took up the powerful weapon shot by Bhisma on his chest (Vaksha-Sthalam), which was delightfully condemned by the Acharyas that, in the name of saving Arjuna, Lord put Goddess Lakshmi in danger. In this way, Supreme Lord Vishnu appears in whatever form, his supremacy is understood by the presence of Goddess Lakshmi in his chest as Srivatsa, and this is one of the identifications of the Supreme Lord in the spiritual world.

When the same Lord Vishnu, who appeared to Lord Brahma as Lord Ranganatha along with Pranavakara Vimana, as usual, Goddess Lakshmi adored the chest of Lord Ranganatha and gave darshan to Lord Brahma, that deity was worshipped by Brahma in Satyaloka, which is finally arrived at Sri Rangam and worshipped by Azhwars and Acharyas. Whenever Azhwars sing the glories of Lord Ranganatha, they will address him along with Goddess Lakshmi (Sri Ranga Nayaki), who adores his chest. Nammazhwar in his composition Thiruvaimozhi [4.5.2] states,

maiya kannaal malarmel uraivaal uraimaarbinan
seyya kolath thadangannan vinnor perumaan dhannai
moyya sollaal isaimaalaigal eththi ullap perren
veyya noygal muzhudhum viyan nyaalaththu veeyave

Meaning: My Lord Narayana (Lord Ranganatha), who possesses eyes like that of the most beautiful red lotuses, is the Chief of liberated souls. Goddess Lakshmi (Sri Ranga Nayaki), is the one who has the most merciful and most beautiful eyes, which are dark with Kaajal in Her eyes, and is the one who sits gracefully on the Lotus Flower and eternally stays in his chest. That shows the world that, he is the Supreme Lord of everyone. I decorate him with garlands of songs and worship him with music. All the terrible sicknesses of this world will not come to me.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Sri Nivasa Bujanthara – On one whose chest Goddess Lakshmi resides,” in this case, it may appear that before the churning of Milk ocean, there was no place for Goddess Lakshmi on the chest of Lord Vishnu, it is not true, Goddess Lakshmi eternally resides on the chest of Supreme Lord Vishnu. In the material world, Lord Vishnu enacts these pastimes joyfully for the purification of living entities.

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Holy Name 6: Indra Neelothpala Shyama

Mantra: Om Indra Neelothpala Shyamaya namah

Meaning – One whose bodily hue is like that of Blue sapphire (which is the color like dark clouds or Ocean)

Pastime – Thirumanagai Azhwar in his composition, he sang that,

poivannam manattahattri pulanaindum selavaittu
meivannam ninaindavarku meininravittahanai
maivannam karumuhil poltihazhvanna marahadattin
avvanna vannanai yan kandadu tennarangatte

Meaning: I saw the dark cloud-colored lord of Sri Rangam, Lord Ranganatha, a shining emerald, who has removed my false thoughts and made me control my mind. If people think of his true form, the clever lord is the truth for them.

Nammazhvar, who is the greatest of all the azhwars, use to compose verses in various ways on Supreme Lord Narayana, especially on the Lord's form in different holy places. Still, he cannot bear separation from Lord Narayana and he assumes himself in the role of the Lord's lover and in this role he is known as Parankusa Nayaki. He also plays the role of the pining girl's mother and her friend. In four states, Nammazhvar penned verses — as Nammazhvar himself, as Parankusa Nayaki the girl who cannot bear the separation, as the mother of Parankusa Nayaki and Parankusa Nayaki's friend. The verses he wrote as Nammazhvar show his knowledge, and the verses he wrote in the other three roles show his love for the Lord. He wrote more than 700 verses as Nammazhvar and more than 200 verses in the other three roles he assumed.

Once Nammazhvar assumed the mood of the pining girl's mother and composed several verses on Lord Ranganatha, the predominating deity of Sri Rangam. In this case, she took up the stand of Goddess Lakshmi's mother and composes several verses condemning Lord's nature, Nammazhvar in the mood of a pining girl's mother worries and says,

Her dear daughter has not slept for days and nights. She tells the Lord that her daughter is searching for Him furiously everywhere. The mother then asks the Lord a blunt question: "Oh Lord of the fertile Sri Rangam! What do you propose to do with my dear daughter that You are tormenting? What is going to happen to my dear one and where is all this going to end? Explain to me the purpose of your taking a permanent abode at Sri Rangam. Is it for us to enjoy Your beauty? If so what have You done to my daughter and what remedy do You propose to get her out of her suffering on behalf of You? I do not know what you have in mind. Please tell me about it demands the harried mother. Please take pity on my daughter. She clearly does not deserve this treatment at Your hands. Is what all you are doing (to cause pain to my daughter) arise from my own past sins? They say that You come to the rescue of devotees, who seek after You. They say that you will not let them sink in a morass. My daughter is a tender one going through all of these sufferings for You. She is Goddess Lakshmi herself. How can you have such a hard heart and abandon her and not listen to her soulful appeals? I know not what end she will have due to Your heartlessness."

When the mother of the pining girl was wondering how her daughter was going to reach her goal of union with the Lord of Sri Rangam, she found out that her daughter had already reached the lotus feet of the Lord with the hue of the rain-

laden clouds. The mother concludes on a happy note that like the rain-laden clouds bless the world with the rejuvenating rains, The Supremely compassionate Lord of Sri Rangam, Lord Ranganatha, has showered His benevolent compassion on her daughter and made her dreams come true.

Below is the actual translation of the verses composed by Nammazhvar in the mood pining girl's mother to Lord Ranganatha, the Lord of Sri Rangam,

"My daughter doesn't sleep night or day. With her fingers, she wipes away the tears that drip from her eyes. She folds her hands, worships, and says, 'Conch and discus!' Tired, she says, 'He has lotus eyes!' She says, 'How can I survive without you?' and with her hands, she searches all over for you, Oh Lord of Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) with abundant water where lovely kayal fish frolic, what did you do to make her like this?"

"My daughter says, 'You are my lotus-eyed Krishna. Why do you do this to me?' Her eyes fill with tears and she says, 'You are the lord of Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) surrounded by the ocean roaring with waves. What will I do?' and she sighs and melts. She says, 'I have done much bad karma and that is why you don't come before me. Is that right?' O lord who swallowed the world and spat it out, what will happen to her?"

"My daughter doesn't feel ashamed at all. She says, 'You have the color of blue sapphire.' She looks at the sky and, fascinated, says, 'You are unique and you destroyed the asurans who gave fear to all people.' Her heart melts and she says, 'No one can see you. Give me your grace so I may see you who is Rama of the Kahusta dynasty and Kaṇṇan.' O you who stay in Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) surrounded by walls where flags fly, what did you do to fascinate her?"

"My daughter stays in one place without moving her hands and legs. Sometimes she gets up and walks around. Fascinated with someone, she folds her hands in worship, says, 'Love is trouble' and sighs. In her delusion, she says, 'You have the color of the ocean. See, how difficult you are, you with the round discus in your left hand. Come to me.' You, a sage, stay in Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) surrounded by flourishing water. What do you think you are doing to her?"

"My daughter, lost in thought, folds her hands, worships all the directions, and says, 'You stay in Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam).' Her eyes fill with tears. Fascinated by you, she worships you and says, 'Come to me.' She says, 'Once, in the evening, you split open the body of Hiranyan. You are the sweet nectar that was churned from the milky ocean rolling with waves.' She thinks only you are her refuge and lives for you who have made her fall in love with you."

"My daughter says, 'He fascinated me and attracted my mind.' She says, 'You are a real Mayan, a diamond and your red mouth is beautiful.' She says, 'You stay in Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) surrounded by cool water.' She says, 'You are the ancient god of gods in the sky and you carry a strong sword, club, conch, discus, and a bow.' O god who rests on Adisesha, give her your grace. This is the only thing I ask you."

"My daughter says, 'You created sorrow and happiness, you are desire for those who have no desire, you carry the discus that destroys those who are evil, and you, Kaṇṇan, have the color of the ocean and rest on the ocean,' and she says, 'You, my sacred temple, stay in Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) surrounded by

water where fish frolic.' She is my lovely daughter, soft as a tender shoot, and her beautiful eyes are filled with tears."

"My daughter says, 'He who carried Govardhana mountain and protected the cows is a tender shoot for the gods in the sky.' She cries for him and worships him and she sighs are hot as fire. She says, 'You have the color of kohl.' She just looks up without even blinking her eyes and says, 'Where should I look to find you?' O lord of Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) surrounded by flourishing ponds filled with water, what should I do for my lovely daughter?"

"My daughter says, 'You embrace lovely Lakshmi on your chest. You are my life, the beloved of the earth goddess whom you brought up from the underworld taking the form of a boar and splitting open the earth.' She says, 'You conquered seven bulls to marry the cowherd girl Nappinnai and you are her beloved husband.' O Lord of the temple of south Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam), I don't understand what will happen to my daughter."

"My daughter says, 'I don't see any end to my suffering. You are the ruler of all the three worlds, you are Lord of Shiva, whose matted hair is adorned with fragrant kondrai flowers, Nanmuhan, and the lord of the beautiful demigods in the sky.' She says, 'You stay in flourishing Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam).' She was not able to approach his feet but now she has reached the lotus feet of the cloud-colored Supreme Lord Ranganatha, the lord of Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam)."

Throughout the verses composed by Nammazhvar, where Nammazhvar in the mood of a pining girl's mother points to Lord Ranganatha, who is the Lord of Sri Rangam, who possesses the color of blue sapphire, whose body is of the color of the ocean, whose body is of the color of the rain-laden clouds or dark clouds, etc… That's why Lord Ranganatha is known as "Indra Neelothpala Shyama – One whose bodily hue is like that of Blue sapphire (which is the color like dark clouds or Ocean)."

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Holy Name 7: Pundareeka Nibhekshana

Mantra: Om Pundareeka Nibhekshanaya namah

Meaning – One who has eyes, which resemble the lotus

Pastime – Once, a grand Brahmotsava festival was being celebrated at Sri-Rangam and the Lord was taken out in a procession on Garuda as part of the festival. A lot of devotees had come from different places to witness the festival and Sri-Rangam was fully crowded. As the festival was about to conclude, most of the devotees were planning to return and were busy buying prasadam to start their return journey. After taking part in the festivities and receiving the prasadam from the chief priest of Lord Ranganatha's temple, Ramanuja was returning to his ashram along with his disciples. Ramanuja was walking with his hands on the shoulders of Dasarathi and was narrating the glories of taking part in the Garuda Seva of Lord Ranganatha. All of a sudden his attention was drawn towards a well-built young man who was walking backward with his eyes and attention focused on the bewitching eyes of a young damsel who was walking along with him. The young man was so engrossed in enjoying the beauty of the

lady’s eyes that he was oblivious to his surroundings and was shamelessly admiring her beauty.

Ramanuja was too shocked to see the shamelessness of the young man. He asked one of his disciples to bring the young man to him. One of the disciples went to the young man and stood close to him. The young man noticed Ramanuja’s disciple and, with folded hands, said, “Sir, what brings you here? A learned Brahmana like you are worthy of respect. Please tell me if I can do anything for you.”

Ramanuja’s disciples said, “I am one of the disciples of the great Yatiraja. I was going with my master and his graceful glance fell on you due to your good fortune. Yatiraja has asked me to bring you to his presence out of his causeless mercy.”

Though the young man was reluctant to go, he could not say no to the Brahmin after hearing the name of Yatiraja as he was very popular and widely respected. The young man went to Ramanuja’s presence and offered his obeisance to Ramanuja and stood by the side of one of the disciples with folded hands.

Ramanuja said, “Where do you come from? What brings you here? Why are you shamelessly looking into the eyes of that young lady in full public view? How can you be so enamored by an ordinary female and shamelessly adore her like that?”

The young man said, “I am, Danurdasa, a wrestler from Nichulapuram, and I had come here to witness the Garuda Seva of the Lord. She is Hemamba and I am madly in love with her. The beauty of her eyes is such that I cannot take my eyes off her and it can captivate anyone. Though I am not married to her I have resolved to marry her and not look at anyone else.”

Ramanuja was stunned at the reply given by Danurdasa and started to admire the amazing power of Prakriti (material nature), and its ability to influence the minds of people and to keep them in its grip. Ramanuja said, “What will you do if I show you a pair of eyes that are many times more beautiful and captivating than the eyes of your lady love?”

Danurdasa said, “I have not come across eyes that are more beautiful than that of Hemamba. If you can show me the pair of eyes that are more beautiful than hers I will become a slave to those eyes and spend the rest of my life in their service.”

Out of his causeless mercy, Ramanuja had decided to reform Danurdasa and, following his plan, Ramanuja asked Danurdasa to meet him near the main gate of the temple that evening before leaving for his ashram. Danurdasa decided to come back along with Hemamba that evening to find out if he could see a pair of eyes that were more beautiful than Hemamba’s.

Danurdasa had come to the main gates of the temple much before the prefixed time and was eagerly waiting for Ramanuja to come. As usual, Ramanuja and his disciples came to the temple to have the darshan of the Lord that evening and Danurdasa accompanied them. As soon as they reached the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Ranganatha’s temple, Ramanuja asked Danurdasa to come forward. Danurdasa, who was very attached to his lady love, came to the door of the sanctum sanctorum along with Hemamba at once. The chief priest of the temple

performed arati to the Lord following the instructions of Ramanuja. After the arati, Ramanuja asked the chief priest to take the lamp closer to the eyes of Lord Ranganatha and said, “Behold the most beautiful and captivating eyes in the entire creation. May Lord Ranganatha reveal the divine beauty of His eyes to you!”

Danurdasa saw the beautiful eyes of Lord Ranganatha and became speechless for some time. He was so captivated by the eyes of the Lord that he forgot Hemamba and started thinking about the Lord. He decided to dedicate the rest of his life to serving the Lord just by seeing the captivating beauty of the Lord’s eyes. As soon as he went out of the main hall of Lord Ranganatha’s temple, Danurdasa prostrated before Ramanuja and thanked him for opening his eyes. Danurdasa requested Ramanuja to accept him as a disciple. Both Danurdasa and Hemamba got married with the blessings of Ramanuja. Ramanuja initiated Danurdasa and Hemamba by performing the five-fold sacraments and both of them continued to live in Sri-Rangam and serve Ramanuja.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Pundareeka Nibhekshana – One who has eyes, which resemble the lotus.”

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Holy Name 8: Srivatsa Lanchitha

Mantra: Om Srivatsa Lanchithaya namah

Meaning – One who is distinguished from other personalities due to his Srivatsa, the resting place of Goddess Lakshmi, mark

Pastime – Azhwars are considered the 12 devotees of Lord Narayana, who were instrumental in popularising Vaishnavism in the Tamil-speaking regions. The Azhwars were influential in promoting the Bhagavata cult and the two Hindu epics, namely, Ramayana and Mahabaratha. The religious works of Azhwars in Tamil, songs of love and devotion, are compiled as Nalayira Divya Prabandham containing 4000 verses and the 108 temples revered in their songs are classified as Divya desams.

The verses of the various azhwars were compiled by Nathamuni, a 10th-century Vaishnavite theologian, who called it the "Dravida Veda or Tamil Veda". The songs or Divya Prabandam are regularly sung in all the Vishnu temples around the world.

Unlike normal human beings, Thiruppaan-Azhwar was not born of a mother but was found in a paddy field by a childless man of panar caste on the outskirts of Nichulapuram, the present Uraiyur. Thiruppaan-Azhwar appeared on this planet in the 342nd year of the Kali-yuga. Thiruppaan-Azhwar is said to be a manifestation of Srivatsa, a divine mark on the chest of the Lord. The childless man was too captivated by the enchanting glow that radiated from the child’s face to leave it unattended in the field. He took it to his wife and both of them nurtured the child like their own. As the man belonged to panar caste, a caste of lute players, he taught his foster son how to play the lute. As Thiruppaan-Azhwar was very proficient in playing lute he is called Thirpanar. Like the other Azhwars, Thiruppaan-Azhwar was not interested in worldly affairs and he spent most of the time singing the glories of the Lord and intuitively contemplating on the Lord.

Thiruppaan-Azhwar did not even have the opportunity of seeing the Lord often because of his birth in a lowly panchama caste. The panchama castes were among the lowest in the strata of the caste system in ancient days and the people of the panchama castes were not even allowed to stay in the villages or towns where the higher castes lived and were treated as untouchables. Therefore, Thiruppaan-Azhwar did not even have the opportunity to associate with the devotees to listen to the glories of the Lord. Thiruppaan-Azhwar could only see the utsava deity form of the Lord whenever the deity came out of the temple during festivals. Yet, Thiruppaan-Azhwar became a very great devotee and an Azhwar overcoming all the hurdles that blocked his access to the Lord.

According to Divya-Suri Charitam, Thiruppaan-Azhwar was so focused on the Lord that he used to forget himself and his surroundings whenever he used to sing about the Lord. Being a personification of humility, Thiruppaan-Azhwar used to consider himself lowly and never used to cross paths with the people of the higher castes as he was born in the lowest caste. Once, Thiruppaan-Azhwar went to take a bath in river Cauvery and became engrossed in contemplating the Lord. He had become indifferent to the happenings around him and was standing still in the river. Lokasaranga Muni, a Brahmin devotee who had dedicated his life to serving Lord Ranganatha, came to Cauvery to fetch water for Lord Ranganatha's ablutions and Thiruppaan-Azhwar was too engrossed in contemplation to notice Loka-Saranga-muni's arrival. As Thiruppaan-Azhwar was from a panchama caste, Loka-Saranga-muni thought that he would become impure if he took bath in that place and tried to shoo him away. As Thiruppaan-Azhwar did not respond to any of his calls, Loka-Saranga-Muni took a stone from the banks of the river and threw it at Thiruppaan-Azhwar to chase him away from that area. The stone fell on Thiruppaan-Azhwar's face and injured him. Blood started to ooze out of the wound and Thiruppaan-Azhwar, who was contemplating on the Lord till then, came back to his senses. Seeing a Brahmin devotee on the banks of the river, Thiruppaan-Azhwar ran away from there thinking he had offended the devotee by not coming out of the river when he came to take bath.

Lokasaranga Muni cleansed the place, took bath in the river, offered ablutions as prescribed for his caste, and left for the Lord's temple carrying water for the Lord's ablutions. Lokasaranga Muni reached the temple and to his surprise, the doors of the temple would not open despite his best efforts to open them. Loka-Saranga-Muni was astonished and worried as the Lord was not willing to accept his services.

Lokasaranga Muni tried every possible means to appease the Lord and the Lord ignored his earnest prayers. Being dejected, Lokasaranga Muni returned to his dwelling and went to bed. The Lord appeared in his dream and said, "You have offended our dearest devotee thinking that he belongs to a lower caste. The devotees are above all material considerations and titles like caste, class, etc., as they strive to overcome them and they have to be identified and respected for their devotion alone. If you want us to accept your services, bring Thiruppaan on your shoulders to our temple tomorrow."

Being a staunch believer in the ritualistic section of the Vedas, Lokasaranga Muni was stunned to hear the Lord speaking thus and repented for having humiliated a great devotee. He woke up and rushed to Nichulapuram to fetch Thiruppaan-Azhwar to the temple as directed by the Lord. Thiruppaan-Azhwar saw Lokasaranga Muni coming towards him and started to run thinking that he might once again incur his wrath if he continued to stay there being untouchable.

Lokasaranga Muni saw Thiruppaan-Azhwar running and requested him to stop. Thiruppaan-Azhwar thought that the Muni was coming to punish him for polluting the area from where water was regularly taken for the Lord's ablutions and continued to run away from him. Lokasaranga Muni started to run behind him. As Thiruppaan-Azhwar did not show any signs of slowing down, Loka-Saranga-Muni told him about the Lord's order and Thiruppaan-Azhwar stopped immediately. Despite being a very humble devotee, Thiruppaan-Azhwar allowed Lokasaranga Muni to carry him on his shoulders after coming to know about the Lord's command.

All the devotees and onlookers were stunned to see Loka-Saranga-Muni, a Brahmin who had come all the way from North India to serve the Lord, carrying Thiruppaan-Azhwar, who was untouchable. Loka-Saranga-Muni slowly carried Thiruppaan-Azhwar across the Mada streets and into the main temple. Even as Lokasaranga Muni reached the Garuda-sthamba, Thiruppaan-Azhwar could not control his excitement as he was seeing the Deity form of the Lord for the first time in his life and started to sing the glories of the Lord. The door of the sanctum sanctorum automatically opened as Lokasaranga Muni went closer to the sanctum. Thiruppaan-Azhwar slowly disembarked from the shoulders of Loka-Saranga-Muni and went into the sanctum sanctorum. It is said that the Lord personally appeared in His all-attractive form and embraced Thiruppaan-Azhwar.

It is told that Lord Ranganatha had personally shielded Thiruppaan-Azhwar when Lokasaranga Muni was hurling stones to shoo him away from the river. Therefore, people could see some wounds on Lord Ranganatha when the doors of the temple opened. Thiruppaan-Azhwar vanished along with the Lord and his person was never to be seen after that.

Thiruppaan-Azhwar had sung ten hymns glorifying the Lord when Lokasaranga Muni was carrying him to the sanctum sanctorum and those hymns are called Amalanadipiran and are included in the first thousand verses of the Divya-Prabandham. It is told that, when he entered the sanctum of the Lord and sang the 10^{th} hymn, he disappeared from this world and entered the transcendental abode of Lord Rangannatha.

Despite being born into a caste of untouchables, Thiruppaan-Azhwar, thus, attained the mercy of the Lord and became one of the greatest saints that the Vaishnava world has ever seen.

Through this pastime, the Lord has clearly established that anyone can become His devotee irrespective of one's material adjuncts like caste, class, etc., that are attributed to one's material body and only devotion matters to Him. Even today many Vaishnavas believe that one can become a very humble devotee just by worshiping Thiruppaan-Azhwar with devotion.

Usually, Srivatsa, which is the resting place of Goddess Lakshmi, is the identification mark for Lord Vishnu, because, in Vaikunta, many devotees will possess a body like that of Lord Vishnu, but the difference is known just by recognizing the Srivatsa Mark of Lord Vishnu on the chest. Similarly, there are many effulgent personalities among demigods, but among them, Lord Vishnu will be recognized by seeing the Srivasta mark on the chest.

In this case, Thiruppaan-Azhwar, who is an incarnation of that Srivatsa Mark of Lord Vishnu (Ranganatha), appeared to enact a pastime, to actually show the

difference between other personalities or demigods and him, that is, any personalities like Kings, demigods, etc… even though they were great people and having a great position in the country, universe, etc… still, they will see the position of the people, whom they deal with us, they will never ever deal with the people of lower caste. These can be seen in the Puranas like rejecting Vishwamitra, Trishanku's case of not allowing to heaven, etc… Like these hundreds of evidence can be found. But, Supreme Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) is the father of all living entities, irrespective of color, caste, creed, body, life, etc… he accepts all the living entities without discrimination like demigods, sages, etc… To show this to the world, Srivatsa, which acts as the identification mark to Lord Vishnu (Ranganatha), appeared in lower caste and enacted only this pastime and reached back to his place, which is the chest of Lord Ranganatha by entering the deity of the Lord Ranganatha. That's why Lord Ranganatha is known as "Srivatsa Lanchitha – One who is distinguished from other personalities due to his Srivatsa, the resting place of Goddess Lakshmi, mark."

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Holy Name 9: Haari

Mantra: Om Haarine namah

Meaning – One who takes away (sins of his devotees) or One who defeats

Pastime – Azhwars are considered the 12 devotees of Lord Narayana, who were instrumental in popularising Vaishnavism in the Tamil-speaking regions. The Azhwars were influential in promoting the Bhagavata cult and the two Hindu epics, namely, Ramayana and Mahabaratha. The religious works of Azhwars in Tamil, songs of love and devotion, are compiled as Nalayira Divya Prabandham containing 4000 verses, and the 108 temples revered in their songs are classified as Divya Desams.

The verses of the various azhwars were compiled by Nathamuni, a 10th-century Vaishnavite theologian, who called it the "Dravida Veda or Tamil Veda". The songs or Divya Prabandam are regularly sung in all the Vishnu temples around the world.

Thirumangai Azhwar was born in a small village near Sirkazhi in Tamil Nadu, in the Mutharaiyar family (warrior community). Azhwar's father was Nilam Mutharaiyar, a general under the Chola empire. He is the twelfth and last among all Azhwars.

Thirumangai Azhwar was skilled in archery and worked as a military commander himself for the Chola king. In recognition of his valor, he has rewarded a small place called Ali Nadu to govern, its capital being Thirumangai. He earned the title Thirumangai Mannan or King of Thirumangai.

His call to the spiritual journey and superior bhakti came when he married the divine and most beautiful Kumudavalli Naachiyaar. She set two conditions for him before she would marry him. One was for him to embrace Vaishnavism by taking proper initiation from an Acharya and the second was to serve 1008 devotees of the Lord with a grand meal daily for one year. And also he has taken up the task of renovating of Sri Ranganatha Temple in Sri Rangam.

Azhwar's ardent desire to keep his promise to his wife made him spend beyond his means. Over time he lost his Kingdom and was not able to serve the temple through renovation. In the extreme situation, he decided to rob the rich to keep up the feeding of the devotees of the Lord and continue his temple renovation service.

Thirumangai Azhwar never used to steal from the devotees and good men but from crooks, who used to cheat others, evade taxes and gain wrongful profit, and strictly used all the money he generated through his wrongful deeds only to feed the devotees.

Thirumangai Azhwar started to find it more and more difficult to canalize resources to continue his service towards the end of the one-year term during which he was supposed to consume his meal only after feeding 1008 pious devotees every day to complete the vow that he had undertaken to observe. At times he used to eat his first meal of the day very late in the night after arranging the necessary resources to feed the devotees the following day.

As he did not have sufficient funds to continue his service the next day, Thirumangai Azhwar went along with his associates to a distant pathway in which rich businessmen and travelers used to travel from one country to another in their business pursuits to rob some rich businessmen. One of his associates climbed the tallest tree to alert the others as soon as he saw a business caravan passing through that way and, thereby, help his associates get ready to ambush the caravan and rob the businessman. However, not even a single caravan or a traveler passed through the pathway that day and Thirumangai Azhwar decided to wait till someone passed through as he did not have any other means to fund his service.

Thirumangai Azhwar patiently waited near the pathway for a very long time and as not even a single traveler passed through that path till afternoon he became very anxious. He started to pray and requested the Lord to help him continue his service by sending some rich businessmen through that pathway.

Strange are the ways of the Lord and even strangers are the means through which He reclaims the recalcitrant souls that have temporarily severed their eternal relationship with Him. As the Lord did not want to disappoint Thirumangai Azhwar and, at the same time, send some other victim to appease His devotee, the Lord Himself decided to go through that pathway.

The Supreme Lord Ranganatha assumed the form of a Brahmin bridegroom and Goddess Lakshmi-Devi, the universal mother, assumed the form of His bride. The Lord and His consort started to go along with their retinue through the pathway to the place where Thirumangai Azhwar was waiting to ambush and rob them. Thirumangai Azhwar’s associate who had climbed the tree saw the Lord’s retinue coming towards them from a distance and mistook it to be a marriage party and alerted his leader before climbing down to join the band.

Thirumangai Azhwar and his men pounced upon the marriage party that seemed unprepared for such an ambush and directed everyone in the party to hand over their valuables by brandishing their swords. Everyone in the party including the Lord removed their jewels and handed them over to Thirumangai Azhwar along with the money that they were carrying.

Thirumangai Azhwar collected the jewels in the bags which he was carrying, and when he was about to escape the scene Thirumangai Azhwar noticed a small ring around one of the fingers on the bridegroom's foot. Thirumangai Azhwar wanted to snatch that ring too as he thought it would help him feed a few more devotees and tried to pull it out. As the ring was very tightly attached to the finger he could not pull it out. Therefore, he tried to bite it with his teeth, and in the process, his mouth touched the Lord's foot. Thirumangai Azhwar and his associates tried to lift the bags in which they had collected the jewelry after removing the ring from the Lord's feet and they were unable to lift the bags.

As all their efforts to lift the bags failed, Thirumangai Azhwar brandished his sword and said, "You seem to be a magician of some sort or know some mantra that would make it impossible for us to lift the bags. Undo the magic that you have applied or your head will roll."

The Lord, who had assumed the form of Brahmin bridegroom, said, "Yes! I know a mantra that can help you do anything and even attain liberation. The same mantra was revealed by Lord Narayana to His associate Nara at Badarikashrama. It is a guarded secret! Bend down and bring your ear closer to me, I will reveal it to you."

Being very proud of his prowess, Thirumangai Azhwar did not want to bend before the groom. He pointed his sword toward the Lord and said, "I don't bend before anyone. Reveal the mantra at once or you are a dead man."

Though the Lord was amused at Thirumangai Azhwar's reply He revealed the eight syllabled ashtakshri mantra (Om Namo Narayana!), which is believed to be the source and essence of Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva Vedas and is revealed in Narayana-Upanishad. Thirumangai Azhwar chanted the mantra and the bags that seemed to be as heavy as mountains became light, because of the mantra, the heavy mountain-like sins vanished and became light by the mercy of Supreme Lord Ranganatha. Mistaking the Lord for an ordinary bridegroom, Thirumangai Azhwar left the scene along with his associates and the booty.

Being amused at Thirumangai Azhwar's determination to fulfill his promise, the Lord vanished from there allowing the mantra that He had revealed to work its magic on Thirumangai Azhwar. Thirumangai Azhwar returned to Thiruvali and fulfilled the promise that he had made to his wife and by the time he fulfilled it he had become saintly and a very good devotee of the Lord. Thirumangai Azhwar's speech and knowledge got perfected as soon as he touched the foot of the Lord with his mouth and he became one of the greatest poets due to that.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Haari – One who takes away (sins of his devotees) or One who defeats," in this case, Thirumangai Azhwar performed all the sinful activity of stealing for the service of Lord Ranganatha, who took compassion on Thirumangai Azhwar appeared as the Brahmin bridegroom and took away all the sins of his dear devotee, Thirumangai Azhwar, purified him.

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Holy Name 10: Vanamali

Mantra: Om Vanamaline namah

Meaning – One who is adorned with a garland made up of forest flowers

Pastime – Thondar-adi-podi Azhwar, who is also called Bhakta-angri-renu, is tenth among the blessed Azhwars in the chronological order. Bhakta-angri-renu was born in the 288th year of Kali-yuga.

Bhakta-angri-renu is believed to be a manifestation of the Lord's garland, Vanamala, which symbolizes the elements in their rudimentary forms. As Bhakta-angri-renu was born in a traditional Brahmin family, his parents named him Vipra Narayana, tonsured his head when he turned eight, and sent him to study Vedas after performing the necessary rituals. Very soon, Vipra Narayana mastered the four Vedas and six ancillary subjects that were supposed to be studied by Brahmins. As Vipra Narayana was naturally inclined towards devotional service he went on a pilgrimage after completing his studies.

Vipra Narayana reached Sri Rangam visiting all the important sacred places including Sri-Perumbandhur, Kanchipuram, and Sholingur on the way. Even as Vipra Narayana entered the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Ranganatha's temple he was captivated by the beauty of the Lord's enchanting eyes. Unlike normal human beings, who see the deity form of the Lord as a stone or idol, Vipra Narayana saw the live presence of the Lord in His deity form.

He was so captivated by the form of the Lord that he decided to dedicate the rest of his life to offering floral service to the Lord and started working in the Lord's flower garden while staying in Sri Rangam. Like Vishnu-Chitta, he used to work in the garden, nurture the flower-bearing plants and Tulasi, get up very early in the morning, tie a cloth around his nose and mouth, and pluck the buds and Tulasi leaves before the sun rays touch them to prepare garlands for the Lord every morning. As the years rolled on, people started to appreciate and acknowledge Vipra Narayana's sincere service to the Lord.

Deva-devi, a courtesan who is believed to be a celestial nymph in her previous birth, was returning to her native place, Thiru-karambanur, after visiting the Chola King's court at Nichulapuri (i.e., the present Uraiyur) along with her associates and maids. As she was exhausted, Deva-devi and her associates decided to rest for a while under a tree, which was in the periphery of Lord Ranganatha's flower garden.

Deva-devi and her associates were captivated by the beauty of the flower garden and started to appreciate the patterns and neatness of the garden. Even as they were describing the beauty of the garden, Deva-devi saw Vipra Narayana, who was working on the garden unaware of their presence.

With his beard, white robes, and a Vaishnava Tilaka on his forehead Vipra Narayana seemed different from others. Though Deva-devi, who was regarded as a woman of matchless beauty, was standing at a close distance, Vipra Narayana was ignorant of them and indifferent.

Deva-devi, who was used to the attention showered on her by men wherever she went, could not digest Vipra Narayana's indifference. She tried to draw his attention towards her by raising her voice while speaking to her maids and Vipra Narayana was not attracted towards her as he had focused his mind on the Lord. Deva-devi looked at one of her associates and said, "Look at him, is he deaf and

dumb or mad? He is not even noticing us though we are doing enough to attract his attention."

Her associate replied, "He is a great devotee of Lord Ranganatha and has subdued his senses by focusing his mind on the Lord. Unlike the other men he does not aspire for or revel in sensual pleasure; therefore he is not attracted to you and is indifferent to us."

Deva-devi, who was very proud of her beauty, was unable to digest her friend's words. She said, "If that is so I will change his resolve and make him run around me. If I succeed in my attempt you will have to work like my slave for six months and if I fail to do so I will work as your slave for six months."

Deva-devi's associate accepted her challenge. Immediately Deva-devi sent all her associates along with her maids and handed over all her jewels to her maids and remained alone near the garden with determination to win Vipra Narayana's heart.

Deva-devi, after challenging her friend about seducing Vipra Narayana within six months of the time, Being determined to win the wager, Deva-devi tore her clothes and unbridled her hair to make her person look wretched and went as close as possible to Vipra Narayana. Vipra Narayana was too engrossed in contemplating the pastimes and glories of the Lord to notice Deva-devi's antics. Eventually, Deva-devi fell at Vipra Narayana's feet and started to cry.

Vipra Narayana, who had become very compassionate by the virtue of practicing the yamas and niyamas (i.e. all forms of non-violence, self-control, kindness to all beings, forgiveness, reading spiritual literature and focusing his mind on the Lord, austerity, truthfulness and purity of mind) that are supposed to be practiced by a Vaishnava, asked Deva-devi to rise and, being overcome by compassion, asked the reason for her misery.

Deva-devi obediently got up and, with humility that could impress even the stone-hearted, said, "My lord, I am a wretched lady who is doomed by birth. My greedy mother sends me to gratify men of ill virtue to make money. My conscience does not permit me to do such things and I desperately want to come out of the clutches of my mother. As I do not have anyone to help, I am seeking your shelter, please don't drive me away. I will help you in your day-to-day activities and take care of the garden when you are away and, thereby, I will atone for my sins by thus serving the Lord and His devotees. I do not crave riches or a comfortable life. I will satisfy my hunger with the frugal meals that you can offer me."

Vipra Narayana could not refuse to help a lady who had fallen at his feet and, therefore, he asked Deva-devi to stay with him in the garden. Like a very sincere devotee, Deva-devi did all the gardening work and took very good care of the garden for nearly six months to gain Vipra Narayana's confidence.

As the rainy season approached, it started to rain very heavily one evening and Deva-devi, who was sleeping outside, was completely drenched. She started to shiver vigorously to attract Vipra Narayana's attention and compassion. Seeing her in a pathetic condition, Vipra Narayana asked Deva-devi to come into the hut and gave her some of his own clothes, and asked her to dry herself to make her comfortable.

Deva-devi, who had not entered Vipra Narayana's hut till then, entered the hut, dried herself, and scantily dressed herself in Vipra Narayana's clothes to further her cause. Even as Vipra Narayana was going to bed, Deva-devi requested him to allow her to press his feet. As pressing the feet of the great devotees is considered to be one of the most desired services, unsuspecting Vipra Narayana agreed to her request.

Deva-devi, who was an expert in the art of seduction and love making, slowly induced Vipra Narayana to submit to her advances like Menaka seduced sage Vishwamitra in the days of yore. Young Vipra Narayana could not resist his senses for long and he spent the night with Deva-devi.

Deva-devi, who knew the resoluteness of Vipra Narayana, summoned her maids and asked them to bring her jewels and other costumes to ensure that Vipra Narayana does not revert to his austere ways of living and started to induce him to spend time with her every day and gradually started to control him. Being blinded by infatuation for Deva-devi, Vipra Narayana started to avoid his Sandhya and other rituals.

After leaving aside all the rituals Vipra Naryana one fine day abandoned his floral service to the Lord and went with Deva-devi to live with her. Deva-devi allowed Vipra Narayana to live with her till his wealth got exhausted and threw him out of her house immediately after that.

Vipra Narayana was so enamored with Deva-devi that he refused to go away from Deva-devi's house though she tried to drive him out. He sat at Deva-devi's door aspiring for her merciful glance like a devotee would aspire for the glance of the Supreme Lord. He ate the leftovers at Deva-devi's house and continued to stay near the door of her house. Lovelorn Vipra Narayana lost the glow on his face and became emaciated. Yet, he could not overcome his cravings for Deva-devi.

Once the Lord passed by Deva-devi's house along with His consort, Mahalakshmi. Mahalakshmi saw Vipra Narayana and asked the Lord about him. The Lord said, "It is our Vipra Narayana, he used to regularly supply garlands for us. He fell in love with the mistress of this house and now he is spending his time aspiring for a merciful glance of his lover, who is a courtesan."

Universal Mother Lakshmi, who is worshipped as the veritable ocean of compassion, intervened by requesting the Lord to redeem Vipra Narayana, who was once, a very sincere devotee of the Lord. The all-merciful Lord agreed to comply with Lakshmi's bidding. The Lord assumed a human form and knocked at Deva-devi's door. Deva-devi opened the door thinking that Vipra Narayana, who was sleeping at the door, might be knocking to seek her company and was shocked to see a handsome young man at her door.

The Lord handed over a golden cup and said, "I am Vipra Narayana's messenger and my master has sent a present for you. He aspires to live with you like before." Deva-devi became happy to receive such an expensive gift and started to wake Vipra Narayana, who was lying at the door. The messenger disappeared even before Vipra Narayana woke up. Being gratified with the present, Deva-devi spent the night with Vipra Narayana happily.

The following morning when the priests opened the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Ranganatha's temple they were shocked to see the golden cup, which was normally used to offer water to the Lord at night, missing from the plate. The temple administrators started questioning the watchmen and other workers who had spent the night in the temple. Deva-devi's maid, who had come to fetch some water from the temple tank, noticed the commotion and went to the temple out of inquisitiveness. As soon as she got to know about the missing cup she told the chief priest that Vipra Narayana had given the cup to her mistress and her mistress had hidden it beneath her pillow.

The administrators went to Deva-devi's house along with some soldiers and started searching the house. They found the cup and arrested Deva-devi and Vipra Narayana and produced them before the Chola King at Nichulapuram. When the king inquired, Deva-devi said, "A young man who claimed to be Vipra Narayana's messenger handed over the cup to me and I do not know anything about it. My Lord you have been seeing me and I have no dearth of money to commit a sin like stealing the Lord's cup."

However, Vipra Narayana, who did not know about the cup or the messenger, denied any crime on his part and expressed his ignorance about the messenger. The king, who was also a devotee of the Lord, became angry and imposed a very hefty fine on Deva-devi for having entertained such a man and imprisoned Vipra Narayana. Thus, Vipra Narayana, who was once admired by the devotees of Sri Rangam, became a prisoner due to his bad company.

Vipra Narayana's cravings for Deva-devi did not subside even after being imprisoned. He continued to languish in jail for some time. Deva-devi started to sell some of her belongings to pay the fine.

Within a few days, the all-merciful Lord appeared in the Chola King's dream and asked him to release Vipra Narayana. The Lord told the king that He had personally handed over the cup to Deva-Devi as Vipra Narayana's messenger. Though Vipra Narayana had not committed any crime he had to suffer some ignominy due to the sins committed by him during his previous lifetimes.

The Lord asked the king to allow him to continue the floral service that he was doing before as he had suffered enough for the deeds that he had committed during his previous births. The Lord also asked the King not to collect the fine from Deva-devi as she had not committed any crime.

The king woke up immediately and released Vipra Narayana. The king apologized to Vipra Narayana for having imprisoned him by mistake. After duly honoring Vipra Narayana, the king told him about the Lord's vision and the Lord's orders for him. Vipra Narayana realized his mistakes and cursed himself for having wasted a lot of time running around a woman of ill repute.

Vipra Narayana became very happy and grateful to the Lord for having rescued him not only from the king's prison but also from the snares of Maya by making him realize its ephemeral nature. Vipra Narayana went to Sri-Rangam without any delay and started working in the Lord's garden like before and started to offer daily fresh garlands (Vanamala) to Lord Ranganatha. Deva-Devi was also blessed by Lord and she also in her own way continued her services to Lordship.

Having realized the greatness of the Lord and His devotees, Vipra Narayana chose to serve the Lord's devotees besides aspiring to become the dust at their feet. Therefore, Vipra Narayana is popularly known as Thondar-adi-podi-Azhwar or Bhakta-angri-renu, which means the dust of the feet of devotees. Vipra Narayana's devotion to Lord Ranganatha was such that he neither ventured out of Sri-Rangam even to see the other forms of the Lord nor sing about the other deity forms of the Lord in his works.

Thondar-adi-podi-Azhwar continued his services of offering fresh garland with fragrant flowers (Vanamala) to his last day on the earth and after that, he disappeared from the view of mortals and got the blessings from Lord Ranganatha to stay eternally in Sri Rangam and continue his services of offering fresh flower garlands (Vanamala) and compositions, he stayed in Sri Rangam according to mortals view till the age of hundred and five years and having achieved the purpose of his life and the mercy of the Lord.

His stay in Sri Rangam eternally and doing is service was proved by the fact that, much later in his time, thousands of years later, When Thirumangai-azhwar, who started the construction work of Sri Rangam temple on the order of Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam, along with the help of many architects and artisans. As the alignment of one of the proposed ramparts was passing through the flower garden from which Thondar-adi-podi-azhwar was supplying flower garlands to the Lord, Thirumangai-azhwar changed the alignment as a mark of respect to the azhwar. Thondar-adi-podi-azhwar appeared in Thirumangai-azhwar's dream and thanked him for changing the alignment and presented him with the sickle that was used by him to prepare garlands for the Lord. The sickle is called "Arulmari."

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Vanamali – One who is adorned with a garland made up of forest flowers," in this case, the incarnation of Vanamala, appeared as Thondar-adi-podi-azhwar, and dedicated his entire life to the service of Lord Ranganatha by creating a garden in Sri Rangam and offer daily garland with a fragrant flower (Vanamala) to Lordship.

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Holy Name 11: Halayudha

Mantra: Om Halayudhaya namah

Meaning – One who is armed with a plough (in the incarnation of Lord Balarama)

Pastime – Once Sri Vedanta Desikar visits the shrine of Lord Ranganatha at Sri Rangam, has the darshan of Lord Ranganatha's transcendental form. After this he visits the Dasavatara shrine on the temple campus, during then, he over come with spiritual emotions, by seeing the forms, which were assumed by that Lord Ranganatha, who is now reclining in the Supreme abode of Sri Rangam. Being mesmerized by Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Vishnu reclining in Milk ocean, and his various incarnations. He started to compose verses by stating (verse 1),

devona shubhamathanothu dasadha nirvarthyan bhoomikam
range dhaamani labda nirbhara rasaii adhyakshitho bhavukai

yad bhaveshu prauthak videshva anugunaan bhavaan swayam bibrathee
yad dharmair iha dharmini viharathey nana krithir nayika

Meaning: Let the Supreme Lord (Ranganatha), who has acted in ten different roles in the great stage of this material world and made happiness reach his devotees, and the Goddess (Ranganayaki) who acted in appropriate roles along with him, playing the proper Dharma suitable to his Dharma, grant us all that is good.

The first verse is introductory in nature, and Sri Vedanta Desikan offers obeisance to Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Ranganayaki and whose ten divine incarnations he is going to cover in the stotram. The next ten verses are devoted to the ten incarnations, one for each incarnation. The twelfth verse summarizes all the ten incarnations in one verse, and the thirteenth and last verse is a phalasruti.

While describing the Balarama incarnation of Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu), Sri Vedanta Desikan states (verse 9),

pakkath kourava pattana prabruthaya prastha pralambhadaya
thaalangasya thada vidha vihruthya yasthanvanthu bhadrani na
ksheeram sakaryeva yabhirabrudak bhootha prabhoothair gunai
aakoumaraka maswadantha jagathe krushnasya thaa kelaya

Meaning: Let the various playful actions of Lord Balarama, who upturned, the kingdom of Kauravas, who killed demons like Pralamba, and whose playful actions mixed with the playful actions of Krishna, Like the sugar getting mixed up with milk and made them tastier, let him bless us with results that are always good.

Further, while summarizing all the ten incarnations of Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) in a single verse, he states that (verse 12),

iccha meena vihara kachapa maha pothreen yadrucha hare
raksha vamana rosha rama karuna kakustha hela haleen
kreeda vallava kalka vahana dasakalkeen ithi prathyaham
jalpantha purusha punanthi bhuvanam punyougapanyapana

Meaning: Those men who are like the shop that only sells holy acts, and who with pure mind meditate on the Lord Ranganatha calling him, He who was born as a fish due to his own wish, who was born as a tortoise just to play, who assumed the form of a big boar, who without thought came as Narasimha, who was Vamana who was born to protect, who was the very angry Parasurama, who was the merciful Rama, who was Balarama who played with his plough (Halayudha), who was the playful cowherd Krishna, and who is going to be the Kalki riding on a white horse, would surely make this world greatly pure.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Halayudha – One who is armed with a plough (in the incarnation of Lord Balarama),” in this case, while seeing all the ten incarnation deities in Sri Rangam shrine, Sri Vedanta Desikan composed a verse in the glorification of Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu), who is the source of all these incarnations. Especially, when he was

referring to Balarama, he refers to him as a personality, who adored with plough, that is Halayudha (Balarama), the incarnation of Lord Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 12: Peethambaradhara

Mantra: Om Peethambara dharaya namah

Meaning – One who wears yellow silk cloth

Pastime – At Sri Rangam, Sri Ramanuja had many varying and important duties to perform as assigned by Lord Ranganatha. And, inspecting the clothes of the Lord sent for a wash was one of such duties. Sri Ramanuja, among so many varied duties at the temple, routinely inspected the washed clothes of the Lord Ranganatha sent for a wash every day.

One day, Sri Ramanuja saw the clothes (silk cloth - Peethambara) of the Lord had been washed exceedingly well and they looked as if they were new. Sri Ramanuja was very happy with the quality of service provided by the washer-man. He got excited so much that, Sri Ramanuja went straight to the washer-man. Sri Ramanuja took the washer-man by his hand and led him to Lord Ranganatha. For Sri Ramanuja, there were no castes or other barriers.

He treated all believers in Sriman Narayana as equals. That was one of the reasons Sri Ramanuja was very popular among all saints. Sri Ramanuja after reaching Lord Ranganatha's shrine addressed Lord Ranganatha "Lord! You just look at these washed Peethambara clothes of Yours; they look as if they are new. This great devotee of Yours' has done a wonderful job. Therefore, you must reward him." Lord Ranganatha, in reply, asked Sri Ramanuja "What is your recommendation?"

Sri Ramanuja was quick to think and consolidate. Sri Ramanuja said, in reply, to the Lord "Swami, assure him of a seat in Your transcendental abode for discharging his duty of washing the clothes so sincerely and with love and affection". Sri Ramanuja continued further.

Sri Ramanuja, in continuation, said that this washer man's forefathers had sinned, when he descended as Lord Krishna, without any deliberate intention of committing it. So, you good Lord, please condone that sin committed by his forefathers also. What a strange request made by Sri Ramanuja.

It was not that strange because for Lord Narayana the period is beyond significance. Sri Ramanuja was fully aware that Lord Narayana is beyond Time.

When Lord Krishna appeared on this earthly planet, Lord Krishna and his elder brother Lord Balarama had gone over to the city of Mathura, at the invitation of their maternal uncle, Kamsa. Lord Krishna suggested that they should put on the best clothes since they were in a city. Since they had come from a village where they wore ordinary clothes befitting the village and their duties, they wanted to have new clothes. What was their duty in their village? Their duty was to look after the cows. And that called for ordinary clothes. Since they have to come to a city and that too at the invitation of their uncle, they wanted to have the best attire. Even though the intention of the uncle to extend an invitation was

different, and that was to kill Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna wanted to put on the best clothes to look princely in appearance. So, the brothers approached the best washerman in the kingdom of Mathura and called for the best clothes like silk clothes - Peethambara. Naturally, it has to be one of the King. The washer-man not only refused to part with the silk clothes, being afraid of the King but shied them away by making fun of them for their rustic appearance. And that was the sin inadvertently committed by the washerman against Lord Krishna and Lord Krishna was so much angry with the Washerman that he cut the head of the washerman on the spot. This is known to Sri Ramanuja and at the appropriate time, he requested Lord Ranganatha, who is Lord Krishna.

Lord Ranganatha smiled, when he heard the recommendation of Sri Ramanuja, but saw his large-heartedness in recommending so and replied to Sri Ramanuja “We accept all your recommendations.”

That meant that Lord Ranganatha had not only rewarded the washer-man for the good job done now but had also pardoned the wrongs of the forefathers, on the recommendation of Sri Ramanuja, for that good act now performed. And, that made everyone happy. Thereafter, everyone decided to be more devoted to their service. They wanted to try and attain the pardon of any inadvertently committed sins and also seek salvation not only for themselves but possibly for their ancestors! In this case, Lord Ranganatha’s Peethambara, or silk cloth granted blessings to the washerman and his ancestors.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Peethambaradhara – One who wears yellow silk cloth.”

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Holy Name 13: Deva

Mantra: Om Devaya namah

Meaning – One who is the Supreme Lord

Pastime – In Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya numerous Acharyas are starting from Nammazhvar to present-day Acharyas, it is only Swami Desikan is addressed respectfully as "Desikan". Swami Desikan’s original name was Venkatanathan. His parents have chosen this name since Swami Desikan was born during the constellation of Shravanam star, which is the star of Lord Sri Srinivasa. Swami Desikan was born about 130 years after Si Ramanuja departed for Sri Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu. Swami Desikan’s parents were childless for a long time and one-day Lord Sri Srinivasa of Seven Hills ordered them to go on a pilgrimage to Thirumala. Those days there were no buses or trains to travel, so Sri Anatasuri and his wife walked from Kanchipuram to Thirumala by climbing the Hills and had the darshan of Lord Srinivasa. That night they were resting in a Mandapam near the temple. The Lord Sri Srinivasa appeared in their dream as a small Vaishnava boy and gave Thothaaramba a golden bell and she swallowed the bell in the dream. The next day the priests did not find the bell at Lord Srinivasa’s shrine and they were worried and started searching for it. Lord Srinivasa told in a divine voice that the bell has been given to Thothaaramba and she will deliver a son who will be a great scholar like Sri Ramanuja, who will firmly re-establish the supremacy of Vaishnava Sampradaya. To remind everyone of this incident, even today there is no bell in Lord Srinivasa’s shrine. Only the huge bell suspended in the front hall is used while doing daily worship to the Lord.

At the age of seven, after Upanayanam (sacred thread ceremony) Sri Appullar started teaching the Vedas, Shastras, Sri Bhashyam, and Divya Prabandham. He was surprised at the brilliance of Swami Desikan as he has grasped in no time whatever was taught to him. The elders were wondering whether Swami Desikan is the combined reincarnation of earlier Acharyas like Sri Ramanuja, Nathamunigal, and Sri Alavandar. At the age of 20, Swami Desikan mastered all the shastras and became a scholar.

After the death of Sri Appullar, Swami Desikan wanted to chant the Garuda mantra taught to him for many days without food and sleep to receive the blessings of Garuda, the divine bird carrier of Lord Vishnu. It is said in the Scriptures that the Garuda is Veda Swaroopi (the personification of Vedas). Desikan went to Thiruvaheendrapuram and climbed the small hill there and started chanting the mantra. Garuda was pleased with the devotion of Desikan and blessed him with the Hayagriva mantra and instructed him to chant the Hayagriva mantra continuously to receive the blessings of Lord Haygreeva. Then Lord Hayagriva appeared before Desikan and blessed him with the nectar flowing from his mouth. Lord Hayagriva took the seat of Swami Desikan's tip of the tongue as prayed by Desikan. Also, Hayagriva gave a deity of himself for Desikan's daily worship. After receiving blessings from Lord Hayagriva, Swami Desikan came back to Kanchipuram and composed various stotras explaining the concept of surrender. Swami Desikan was mesmerized by the beauty of Lord Varadaraja of Kanchi and composed fifty shlokas on him. His glories spread far and wide.

All the Vaishnava Acharyas have a special love for Sri Rangam Lord Sri Ranganatha. Sri Ramanuja stayed there for long years. During then, the opposition increased against Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, and many religious followers, Mayavadis, etc… started to question the authority of Sampradaya. Especially, they questioned the supremacy of Supreme Lord Ranganatha. Other religious followers, who are Shaktas, Shaivats, Mayavadis, Mimasavadis, etc… use to debate with the Acharyas of Sri Rangam, and many times the debate ends without any conclusions. During this time, Swami Desikan was asked to come to Sri Rangam by other Acharyas, for a debate to prove the correctness of Sampradaya, which is strictly following the scriptures, and also establish the Supremacy of Supreme Lord Ranganatha over all other demigods.

Accepting the orders of Acharyas, Swami Desikan travels towards Sri Rangam, and on the way, he halted at Sriperumpudhur the birthplace of Sri Ramanuja, and composed a stotra on Sri Ramanuja to seek his blessings to win in the debate. This composition is called Yatiraja Saptati, which glorifies all the Acharyas and Sri Ramanuja in particular. After this, he arrived at Sri Rangam, where the debate with scholars of other religious sects went on for seven days, and finally, Swami Desikan demolished every argument of the opponents. The scholars who have debated with Swami Desikan have accepted the defeat and become his disciples. This discussion has been compiled as Satha Dhooshani. Lord Ranganatha was very pleased with their beloved child Swami Desikan's intelligence and conferred him the title of "Vedanta Desikan" Goddesses Ranga Nayaki Thayar conferred the title of "Sarva Tantra Swatantrar", which means, one who is the master of all arts, crafts, etc… The other acharyas assembled there were pleased with this and declared that Swami Desikan indeed deserved these honorary titles.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Deva – One who is the Supreme Lord,” in this case, due to the Supreme Lord’s blessings Vedanta Desikar appeared and perfected in the conclusions of Vedic literature, which is also due to Lord’s special mercy. After that, Lord Ranganatha brought him to his abode, Sri Rangam, to establish his supremacy over all the demigods, and Vedanta Desikar did the same and established from the conclusion of all Vedic literature that, Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) is the Supreme Lord of the entire creation and all the living entities including demigods, sages, human beings, demons, animals, birds, trees, etc…

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Holy Name 14: Nara

Mantra: Om Naraya namah

Meaning – One who appears as the ordinary human being (for the sake of his devotees) or One who is the Sage Nara (constant companion of Lord Narayana and Guru of all living entities)

Pastime – The Supreme Lord Vishnu, who reclines in the ocean of Milk, appeared as Nara and Narayana in Badrikasrama. The twins were sons of dharma, the son of Brahma, and his wife Murti (daughter of Daksha), or Ahimsa. They live at Badrikasharama, performing severe austerities and meditation, for the welfare of the world and mankind. Acharyas states that the Living entities in the material world do not know about the Lord. They do not know why they have been born. They do not know what services they have to do for the Lord. Living entities in the material world are like a man who has lost something but does not even know what he has lost. The Lord did not want them to continue to suffer in samsara. So, Supreme Lord came as Narayana and mediated on himself and engaged in penance at Badrikasrama and initially gave the Ashtakshara mantra to his own expansion Sage Nara (Lord appeared as perfect disciple) and later to Narada and others. In this way, Supreme Lord propagated the glories of himself to the whole world. Further, he guided Srila Madhvacharya to propagate the Dvaita philosophy, in this way by using several ways and means, Lord Nara Narayana engaged in the activity of liberating the living entities from the material world.

During the time of Thirumangai Azhwar, one among the 12 Azhwars, and a staunch devotee of Lord Ranganatha. He took extreme steps for the completion of his services to Lord Ranganatha by building the compound walls of Sri Rangam Temple. Lord Ranganatha merciful appeared to him and transformed his heart. For Thirumangai Azhwar, Lord Ranganatha acted as his Guru and guided him, even the sacred mantra, Atsakashari Mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya Namaha) was given to him by Lord Ranganatha. While engaged in the service of Lord Ranganatha, once Thirumangai Azhwar wishes to travel to all the holy abodes of Lord Vishnu across the country, so he travels on his horse to visit the holy places. During the course of his travel, he visited several holy places like Ayodhya, Naimisharayam, Deva Prayag, Joshimatha, etc… In each place, he sang the glories of Lordship in that particular place in the form of Pashurams (verses). Finally, when he arrived at Badrinath, where he has the darshan of Lord Nara Narayana and sings Pashuram (glorification) considering them as his Guru, like Lord Ranganatha. There he saw, Lord Nara Narayana as Lord Ranganatha because in his case Lord Ranganatha changed his path from a sinful life and gave him Atsakashari Mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya Namaha), and at the

Badrinath, Lord Nara Narayana acted as the pioneer in giving the Atsakashari Mantra to the world, so Thirumangai Azhwar considered Lord Nara Narayana as his Guru and glorified Lordship with 20 Pashurams (verses), which was later got to known as Periya Thirumozhi.

Thirumangai Azhwar records this in his Periya Thirumozhi. While Narayana was the Acharya, Nara was the disciple. While it is understandable that the lord should have come as an Acharya, why did He have to come as a disciple as well? Acharyas answers this question also, we do not know how to be model disciples. To show us how a disciple should behave, Supreme Lord came as a disciple too. So, in his very first Incarnation as Nara Narayana, He shows the world how to be an ideal Acharya and an ideal disciple.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Nara – One who appears as the ordinary human being (for the sake of his devotees) or One who is the Sage Nara (constant companion of Lord Narayana and Guru of all living entities),” in this case, we can understand that Supreme Lord Vishnu, who reclines in the ocean of milk, appeared as an ordinary human being as Sage Nara Narayana and gave the world the Atsakashari Mantra for the upliftment of the world. Further, the same Lord Vishnu appeared as Lord Ranganatha and arrived at Sri Rangam, rectified Thirumangai Azhwar by taking the form of an ordinary human being and gave him the Atsakashari Mantra, in that way, he uplifted him and many beings. Lord Ranganatha can also be known as Sage Nara because the same Lord Vishnu appeared as Narayana, Nara, and Ranganatha, and all three of them acted as the Gurus for giving the living entity, the Atsakashari Mantra.

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Holy Name 15: Narayana

Mantra: Om Narayanaya namah

Meaning - One who is the Sage Narayana (Incarnation of Lord Narayana) or One who is the Supreme Lord Narayana

Pastime – In Srimad Bhagavatam (SB 2.5.16), it is stated,

narayana-paro yogo
narayana-param tapah
narayana-param jnanam
narayana-para gatih

Meaning: All different types of meditation or mysticism are means for realizing Narayana. All austerities are aimed at achieving Narayana. A culture of transcendental knowledge is for getting a glimpse of Narayana, and ultimately salvation is entering the kingdom of Narayana.

In Sri Rangam, once a very humble Brahmana requested Sri Ramanuja to accept him as a disciple and enlighten him by imparting some spiritual knowledge. So that, he will meditate on Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Narayana himself, and perfect his life.

The sacred mantras were not revealed to those who were not very serious about practicing their spiritual life. Moreover, Ghostipurna had asked Ramanuja not to

reveal the sacred Ashtakshari Mantra to anyone without testing their seriousness in practicing their devotional life. Ramanuja said, “The sacred mantras cannot be revealed unless one’s seriousness and determination in practicing his devotional life is tested. You will have to do some service in the ashram till you gain my confidence to get the sacred mantras, which are the means to liberation.”

The Brahmana readily agreed and said, “Holy sir I am willing to stay in the ashram and do whatever you want me to do. Please accept me as your disciple and impart the knowledge that would help me attain the mercy of Lord Ranganatha. Please tell me the services that are supposed to be done by me.”

Sri Ramanuja liked the Brahmana’s humility and wished to test him. Sri Ramanuja said, “Humble Brahmanas like you are supposed to be very holy. Therefore, I would like to wash your feet after I perform my deity worship and consume the water that is used to wash your feet to cleanse myself. You should appear before me every morning immediately after I finish my ablutions.”

The Brahmana agreed to the condition set by Ramanuja without uttering a word. The Brahmana used to take his bath much before everyone and used to appear before Ramanuja immediately after performing his deity worship Ramanuja used to wash his feet and consume some water used to wash his feet every day. Everyone used to laugh at the Brahmana for his thoughtlessness and yet the Brahmana never missed the service assigned to him. Once, Ramanuja hurriedly went to Lord Ranganatha’s temple without noticing the Brahmana as he had some very important work to attend to. Ramanuja returned to the ashram very late in the night and noticed the Brahmana standing in the place that was assigned to him. Ramanuja asked the Brahmana if he stood the entire day like that without moving from there. The Brahmana replied, “How can I disobey my guru? I must carry out your command.”

Ramanuja was impressed with the Brahmana and told him that he had attained the highest stage of dasya bhakti, wherein one serves the Lord and his devotees as their servants. Ramanuja revealed the sacred Ashtakshari Mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya Namah) to the Brahmana and accepted him as a disciple. Then onwards, the Brahmana started to meditate on the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Narayana, by chanting Ashtakshari Mantra, and at last, by the mercy of Sri Ramanuja, he attained the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha.

Further, Lord Vishnu, who reclines in the ocean of Milk, appeared as Sage Narayana and meditated on himself, and gave Ashtakshari Mantra to Sage Nara. Similarly, the same Lord Vishnu appeared as Lord Ranganatha and gave the Ashtakshari Mantra to Thirumangai Azhwar. The same Ashtakshari Mantra was obtained by Sri Ramanuja under the instruction of Lord Ranganatha. Sri Ramanuja intern instructing the Ashtakshari Mantra to all for liberating them from material entanglement.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Narayana - One who is the Sage Narayana (Incarnation of Lord Narayana) or One who is the Supreme Lord Narayana.”

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Holy Name 16: Hari

Mantra: Om Haraye namah

Meaning – One who is Lord Hari, who takes away all miserable conditions

Pastime – Sri Parasurama Tirtha is the fifth pontiff in the Sri Padmanabha Tirtha's Disciplic Succession of Madhva Sampradaya. After succeeding Sri Sankarshana Tirtha, Sri Parasurama Tirtha lived in Srinagar for some time and later he traveled to South India. Sri Parasurama Tirtha built an ashram in Sri Rangam, Tamil Nadu. He stayed in Sri Rangam for more than 10 years. This period (1322 - 1371) was a turmoil period for the Sri Rangam temple when the temple was under siege by Islamic invaders. During this period, he helped the local kings in their duties and in stabilizing the political condition and the worship in the temple.

The spiritual Master of Sri Parasurama Tirtha is Sri Sankarshana Tirtha and his Spiritual Master is Sri Lakshmi Dhara Tirtha. Both Sri Sankarshana Tirtha and Sri Lakshmi Dhara Tirtha went to Srinagar (Kashmir) for preaching the Dvaita philosophy and both entered Samadhi there in Srinagar and the Samadhis were still people not able to trace them. It is told that Sri Vyasaraja Tirtha during his travel to Sri Nagar worshipped these two Samadhis, established two big ponds, did installed one Lord Hanuman deity. Before entering Samadhi, Sri Sankarshana Tirtha, with his mystic power got to know that the Islamic invasion put the entire Sri Rangam in havoc and great destruction, so he sent his disciple Sri Parasurama Tirtha to South India for reestablishing the Lord Ranganatha temple in Sri Rangam. Sri Parasurama Tirtha entered the abandoned Lord Ranganatha temple and started the regular worship with renovation work.

When we see the Sri Rangam history. The temple suffered a massive invasion during the period 1322-1371. The entire temple structure was razed by Mughal forces led by Malikapur in 1311 and Tuglak in 1323. This period is called "Tulaka Kalabham". The entire force killed around 13,000 Vaishnavas and there was great havoc and there is no devotees to conduct the worship. The forces occupied the temple complex and stayed in the Chandanu Mandapam near the present main shrine, without worship for the deity of Lord Ranganatha. Then Mughal forces were suffering from many diseases, hence later they shifted to the complex near the present Samayapuram, Tamil Nadu. In the year 1371, Lord Namperumal (procession deity of Sri Rangam Temple) returned to Sri Rangam. The Lord Namperumal deity traveled to many places and stayed in Tirumala was quite some time, we can see Sri Ranganatha Mandapam at the Tirumala temple with inscriptions.

Sri Parasurama Tirtha came to Sri Rangam, Tamil Nadu. The entire temple complex was in an abandoned state, with ruins everywhere. Sri Parasurama Tirtha stayed there and assisted in starting worship and the renovation of the temple. The four seers of Sri Padarajara Matha stayed at Sri Rangam and played a major role in the re-establishment of Lord Ranganatha temple in the critical period of temple history.

Sri Parasurama Tirtha selected one of the scholars who visited him and made him his successor. He named him as Sri Adiraja Tirtha. He then entered Samadhi near Chandra Pushkarani (Temple Pond) inside the temple. This Chandra Pushkarani (Temple Pond) is the place where the first Sri Vibheeshana landed with Sri Rangam Vimanam. This Chandra Pushkarani is older than the Sri Rangam temple, it preexists before the arrival of Sri Rangam Vimanam. Later

Lord Hanuman was consecrated near the Samadhi in honor of Sri Parasurama Tirtha.

Opposite the Samadhi of Sri Parasurama Tirtha, we can see two Lord Hanuman deities. The figure resembles the installation done by Sri Vyasaraja Tirtha with special marks like the bell in the tale and the Sowgandiga flower in the hand of Lord Hanuman Deity. Similar to the one which is in Narasimha Tirtha in Mulbagal, Karnataka. Sri Parashurama Tirtha's Samadhi has the carving of Lord Sri Gopinatha, the presiding deity of Sri Padarajara Matha, Goddess Gajalakshmi on the front side and with Kurma Peedam (Tortoise shaped Base), which tells that it is Samadhi of the Sannyasi, rather than merely a Tulasi planting structure.

The next successors like Sri Adiraja Tirtha (1364 – 1384), and Sri Satyavrata Tirtha (1384 – 1400). Sri Swarnawarna Tirtha (1400-1420) also stayed at the Sri Rangam and assisted in the Temple complex getting renovated and also smooth conducting of regular worship to the deities of Lord Ranganatha. These Madhva saints played a major role in the Renovation of the temple and starting regular worship after the massive destruction of the temple. Today also the services done by Madhva Saints are recognized and continued in a small way for the deity of Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Hari – One who is Lord Hari, who takes away all miserable conditions," even though there was great havoc in Sri Rangam due to the Islamic invasion, and there is no single devotee for the uplifting the glory of Sri Rangam and everywhere there was a miserable condition and there is no hope at all, during then, Lord Ranganatha, who empowered his dear devotee from Madhva clan, Sri Sankarshana Tirtha, who sent his disciple Sri Parasurama Tirtha from Kashmir to re-establish the glory of Sri Rangam by starting the worship till the Sri Vaishnava community get back from the great havoc. Accordingly, the four seers after Sri Parasurama Tirtha one after another stayed and dedicated their lives to bringing back the glory of Sri Rangam and establishing the regular worship of Lord Ranganatha. Lord Ranganatha also made all the arrangements to send away all the Muslim armies, who stayed in Sri Rangam and made all feasible arrangements for the seers of Madhva Sampradaya. In this way, the miserable conditions of Sri Rangam were taken away by Lord Ranganatha and provided a conducive environment for the devotees.

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Holy Name 17: Bhoomisahitha

Mantra: Om Bhoomisahithaya namah

Meaning – One who is always with Goddess Earth (Bhumidevi)

Pastime – In Paduka Sahasaranama composed by Sri Vedanta Desikan on Lord Ranganatha verse 391, he states,

shravasormama paranam dishanthi manipadhavani! manjulaI:
pranadhaI: ramaya kshamaya cha dhatthahastham samaye
rangadhurlnamanayetha:

Meaning: "Oh Ratna Paadhuka of Lord Ranganatha! During my last moments on this earth, please make my ears happy with Your special sound, when You bring

Lord Ranganatha close to me. During that unique occasion, Lord Ranganatha would be holding the hands of Sri Devi and Bhumi Devi with His two hands. You should bring Him to me in that way and please my ears with Your sweet sounds that would announce the Lord's arrival with His consorts (Sri and Bhumi)".

(Sri Vedanta Desikan indicates here that he would need the help of both the Devis to plead his case to the Lord. Bhumi Devi would appeal to Her Lord (Ranganatha) to put up with the accumulated sins and not to get angry. Sri Devi would recommend to her Lord (Ranganatha) to bless Sri Vedanta Desikan with liberation.)

During Satya yuga, Hiranyaksha, due to his exploitative activities created a situation where the earth (Bhumi) was drowned to the bottom of the Garbhodaka ocean. When he did it Mother Earth gave a huge cry. At that time, the demigods approached Lord Brahma who prayed to Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu then appeared from the nose of Brahma in the form of Sri Varahadeva. He killed Hiryanaksha and lifted the earth, ‘Bhudevi’ with His tusks, and brought her to a safe position on top of the Garbhodaka ocean.

During then, Goddess Bhudevi asks her Lord Narayana, what was the reason for his decision to take the incarnation of a boar (Varaha) and that her friends were sure to make fun of her. Lord Narayana responds that saving her is his only motive irrespective of comments. For which, she asked Lord Narayana that, because saving her he took the incarnation of Varaha and saved her from the ocean, similarly there are many living entities, who are her sons, were suffering in the material world, which is also the ocean of material existences, for which he must do something. Lord Varahadeva was pleased by the proposal of Goddess Bhudevi, he then makes a promise to his Goddess Bhudevi, she will appear in the world as Andal to propagate the Bhakti among people and he would also appear as an incarnation and marry her. It is this promise of Lord Varaha that results in the incarnation of Goddess Bhudevi as Andal and her marriage with Lord Ranganatha, who as appeared as the lord of Sri Rangam, on Panguni Uttiram day. Finally, after the propagation of Bhakti in the form of compositions, she joined her eternal consort, Lord Ranganatha at Sri Rangam.

Further, as mentioned by Sri Vedanta Desikan, when the living entity surrenders at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, during then Goddess Bhudevi or Bhumidevi, who as appeared as Aandal, appeals to Lord to put up the sins committed by the soul. In this way, Goddess Bhudevi eternal be with her Lord Ranganatha and sometimes appear for the mission of her Lord, which is the upliftment of souls, and in this way, she serves her eternal consort. That’s why Lord Ranganatha is known as “Bhoomisahitha – One who is always with Goddess Earth (Bhumidevi).”

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Holy Name 18: Purusha

Mantra: Om Purushaya namah

Meaning – One who is a Supreme enjoyer

Pastime – During the daily rituals, the verse is chanted to remember and offer prayers to the deities of four Major Temples that Sri Ramanuja was associated with, in many capacities. Each temple and Archavatara deity played a crucial role

in the upbringing, shaping the role and life of Sri Ramanuja. The four temples and deities are Lord Ranganatha of Sriranagam, Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam (Thiruppathi), Lord Varadaraja of Kanchi, and Lord Selva Narayanan of Thirunarayanapuram (Melkote). These Temples are also called by the names Bhoga Mandapam, Pushpa Mandapam, Thyaga Mandapam, and Jnana Mandapam.

sriranga mangala nidhim karuna nivasam
sri venkatadni shikaralaya kalamegam
sri hasthisaila sikarojwala parijatham
srisannamami sirasa yadhusaila deepam

***Meaning**: I bow unto the abode of mercy, the auspicious jewel of Sri Rangam, Sri Ranganatha.I bow unto the dark rain-laden cloud of day on the top of the Hill known as Venkatadhri revered as Sri Venkatesha. I bow unto the wish-granting Paaijaathaa tree shining on the top of the Hasthi sailam (Elephant-like hillock used by Brahma to perform the Yajna, which preceded the Lord's incarnation as Varadaraja). I bow with bent head Thirunarayanan of Melkote, who illumines the world as the lamp on the top of Yathusailam.*

Once Yamunacharya visited Kanchipuram to have the darshan of Lord Varadaraja and he saw Yadava Prakasha coming to the temple with his arms around Ramanuja. Yamunacharya was captivated by Ramanuja's person and the spiritual luster on his face and inquired about him from his disciples. Yamunacharya was happy to know that Ramanuja had refuted Mayavada by writing a commentary on "satyam jnanam anantham brahma," a famous passage from Taittiriya Upanishad, which describes the Lord as Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity.

As Yamunacharya was searching for a worthy successor, who could save the Vaishnavas from the onslaught of Mayavada philosophers and re-establish the glory of Vaishnava philosophy, he felt like talking to Ramanuja, who was devoted to the Lord and was not willing to accept the philosophy of Yadava Prakasha. However, he refrained from doing so to avoid getting into an argument with Yadava Prakasha, who used to despise Vaishnava's philosophy due to his excessive attachment to the Mayavada philosophy. Being concerned about Ramanuja's future, Yamunacharya prayed to Lord Varadaraja requesting Him to bring Ramanuja into the Vaishnava fold before leaving for Sri Rangam, where he was looking after the Deity worship and temple administration of Lord Ranganatha's temple.

After the disappearance of Yamunacharya, by the divine intrusion, Ramanuja accepted the renounced order of life from Lord Sri Varadaraja and started to spend most of his time worshipping or contemplating the glories of the Supreme Lord. Ramanuja's nephew, Dasarathi, became his disciple and started to serve him. Everyone in Kanchipuram used to admire Ramanuja and gather around him whenever he used to discuss scriptures with Kanchipurna and Dasarathi. The news of Ramanuja accepting Sannyasa from Lord Varadaraja started to spread and people from distant places started to flock around Ramanuja to listen to his profound talks. Ramanuja had become so popular that even Yadava Prakasha's mother had come to see him.

Very soon the disciples of Yamunacharya at Sri-Rangam got to know about Ramanuja accepting sannyasa. As the disciples in the monastery established by

Yamunacharya were eagerly looking for a good guide, Mahapurna and other disciples wanted to bring Ramanuja to Sri-Rangam. But, they were reluctant to request him to come to Sri-Rangam as he was very devoted to Lord Varadaraja. Therefore, they prayed to Lord Ranganatha and requested Him to bring Ramanuja to Sri-Rangam to look after the legacy established by Yamunacharya. Lord Ranganatha spoke through his priest and said, “Ramanuja will not even step out of Kanchipuram without the permission of Lord Varadaraja and the Lord to is attached to him. Therefore, send Vararanga to Kanchipuram and ask him to try and appease the Lord with his melodious songs. When Lord Varadaraja asks him to seek a boon let Vararanga ask Lord Varadaraja to send Ramanuja to Sri-Rangam.”

Following Lord Ranganatha’s advice, Mahapurna and others deputed Vararanga, a very good devotee and a great singer, to bring Ramanuja to Sri-Rangam. Vararanga reached Kanchipuram and with the blessings of Kanchipurna, started to serve Lord Varadaraja and sing the glories of the Lord melodiously with devotion whenever he got an opportunity to do so. Being pleased with Vararanga’s services, Lord Varadaraja offered him a boon through Kanchipurna. Vararanga became very happy as soon as Kanchipurna told him about Lord Varadaraja’s benediction. Vararanga immediately requested the Lord to send Ramanuja to Sri-Rangam to carry forward the legacy of Yamunacharya. As Lord Varadaraja was very fond of Ramanuja He was reluctant to send Ramanuja and started to repent for having offered boons without any foresight. Lord Varadaraja once again asked Vararanga if he would ask for anything other than sending Ramanuja to Sri-Rangam and Vararanga was not willing to ask for anything else. As Lord Varadaraja had already given His word He asked Kanchipurna to tell Ramanuja about whatever happened. As soon as Kanchipurna told everything Ramanuja, he offered his obeisance to Lord Varadaraja and left for Sri-Rangam along with Vararanga.

Earlier, when Ramanuja had visited Sri-Rangam he did not have the darshan of Lord Ranganatha as he was angry with the Lord for taking Yamunacharya away from this planet. However, this time, Ramanuja first went to the temple after reaching Sri-Rangam and had the darshan of Lord Ranganatha before going to Yamunacharya’s monastery. Some of the senior disciples of Yamunacharya including Mahapurna, Thiruvaranga Perumal Ariyar, and Dasharathi entrusted Ramanuja with the responsibility of taking care of the Math.

Since Lord Vardaraja on request from Lord Ranganatha released Sri Ramanuja for services at Sri Rangam. This sacrifice of Lord Varadaraja earned the Kanchi temple the name Thyaga Mandapam. Later Sri Ramanuyja visited Thirumala Hills and organized the daily routines and
religious rites at the temple for Lord Srinivasa. He had also deputed his disciple Anandhazhwan to Thirumala to take care of Nandavanam (Garden) and offer flower decorations to Lord Srinivasa on a daily basis. Hence Thirupathi (Tirumala) came to be known as Pushpa Mandapam. When Sri Ramanuja had to escape from Chola Kingdom, he chose to settle down in Melkote, Mandya District in Mysore and spread Vaishnavism by inducting King Vishnu Vardan into Vaishnavam and he took his help to build temples and Matha. Sri Ramanuja made sure that Melkote has the pride of place in the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya and got the name Jnana Mandapam.

Even though all these activities were done for the propagation of Sampradaya, but, Sri Ramanuja and all other acharyas kept their base as Sri Rangam.

Because, just as Lord Narayana enjoys all facilities and luxury in Paramapadam (the spiritual world, the Vaikunta lokas), as the Supreme Enjoyer Lord Ranganatha also thrives in Bhoga at Sri Rangam listening to Ekantha Veeenai in the early morning till the last offering in the temple, everything is offered as the Bhoga to Sri Ranganatha. Everyone and everything in Sri Rangam is the Bhoga or meant for the enjoyment of Lord Ranganatha. Hence Sri Rangam temple is known by the name Bhoga Mandapam and Supreme Lord Ranganatha is the Supreme enjoyer of that Bhoga.

From this incident and also from the verse, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Purusha – One who is a Supreme enjoyer," even among the different forms of deities, the same Lord has different moods, among which, Lord Ranganatha possesses the mood of Purusha, the supreme enjoyer.

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Holy Name 19: Maha Vishnu

Mantra: Om Maha Vishnave namah

Meaning – One who is Maha Vishnu (Karanodakasayi Vishnu), who reclines on casual ocean

Pastime – Once the King of Snakes 'Karkodagan' undertook penance at Namakkal and the context of the penance is to serve Lord Maha Vishnu as his bed, because Lord Maha Vishnu, who reclines on the casual ocean, always uses Adisesha as his bed and due to his penances, he pleases Lord Maha Vishnu and when Lord Maha Vishnu appears before him and asked for required benediction and Karkodagan requested Lord Maha Vishnu to rest on him. Understanding the intense desire of Karkodagan, Lord Maha Vishnu agreed to rest on him as Karkodagan Sayanam at Namakkal. Hence, the posture of Namakkal of Lord Ranganatha is referred to as Karkodaga Sayanam. While he is seen sleeping on top of the Snake, a unique feature here is that the face of the Snake Karkodagan is that of a roaring lion with his head resting South and his feet directed towards the North.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Maha Vishnu – One who is Maha Vishnu (Karanodakasayi Vishnu), who reclines on the casual ocean," for the pleasure of Brahma and other devotees, Supreme Lord Ranganatha appeared for them and arrived on the earth and later moved to Sri Rangam and made it as his permanent abode. That same Ranganatha blesses many of his devotees, who meditate on him and appear and bless them with the fulfillment of their desires. As in this case, he blessed Sanke Karkodagan.

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Holy Name 20: Sanathana

Mantra: Om Sanathanaya namah

Meaning – One who is eternal or One who does not have any beginning or end

Pastime – Lord Brahma, the creator before beginning his work of creation, performed severe penance to invoke the grace and blessings of Lord Vishnu. Pleased by his penances, the Lord manifested Himself in archa-moorthi (deity) form as Lord Sri Ranganatha inside a Pranavakara (OM) Vimana. Lord Brahma

worshipped the deity in Satyaloka. Further, the deity was given to King Ikshvaku by Lord Brahma, then onwards Lord Ranganatha stayed in Ayodhya for many thousands of years. Over time Supreme Lord Vishnu himself appeared as Lord Rama, who performed aradhanam (pooja) to Ranganatha's deity (deity in a reclining posture). As a symbol of love, he gave the deity to Vibhishana to take back with him to Lanka. On the way, he placed the deity on the banks of river Kaveri, while an utsavam was in progress. When the utsavam got over, the Lord refused to move as he loved the place (Sri Rangam). The Chola King Dharma Varma, who was ruling that region, constructed a shrine for Lord Ranganatha and worshipped the deity with great pomp and festivity. After the disappearance of King Dharma Varma, the place got covered with mud due to the flood in River Kaveri and the place looked like a desert - a wide stretch of mud-laden land. The entire temple, deities, etc… everything is under Kaveri mud. Like this many thousands of years passed. During then one of the Chola Kings who was ruling during this period went hunting one day. At the end of hunting, he was tired and so he took shelter under one of the trees. As he was relaxing, a parrot seated on one of the branches of the tree went on repeating a few lines of a verse, the meaning of which he could not comprehend. He went to his palace and consulted scholars. Nobody could enlighten the King.

That night the Lord appeared in his dream, “I am there lying beneath the tree, please take me out”. The King then next day ordered that the mud around the tree be removed. As they dug, they saw the Ranga Vimana. The Vimana with the Lord Ranganatha was brought up. The King made necessary arrangements to repair the first prakara, got the entire sand removed, and dug up the rivers. Then the worship was performed for the Lord and continued the same. He renovated the entire place.

Since the King listened to the parrot’s voice and brought up Lord Ranganatha’s deity, which was hidden in the sand, he was called “Kiliraja Chozhan”. As a mark in his memory, a mandap was built near the Lord Ranganatha deity and it is called “Kili Mantap” (Kili means Parrot). To date, Lord Ranganatha receiving worship from several devotees.

During the process of worship of Lord Ranganatha either in Satyaloka or Bhuloka or any Loka, there will be many obstacles because of the non-permanent nature of the material world, where everyone and everything is temporary, but Supreme Lord Ranganatha is eternal and there is no beginning or end. Before Lord Brahma also Lord was there and after the destruction of the entire creation, Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) will be there. From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Sanathana – One who is eternal or One who does not have any beginning or end.”

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Holy Name 21: Simhasanastha

Mantra: Om Simhasanasthaya namah

Meaning – One who adores the royal throne

Pastime – On every festivity and special occasion, Supreme Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam as his special and grand throne, which is royal in nature. Many kings, understood that the real King of the creation is Lord Ranganatha, so they made a royal throne for Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam, which is made up of Gold and

adored with royal pearls, ivory, etc… As a King, Lord Ranganatha (procession deity of Lord, which is known as Lord Namperumal) use to sit on that royal throne to hear his glories in the form of Azhwars Pashurams, Sama Vedas, etc… Over time, many invasions plundered the Sri Rangam temple, which made the grand royal thrones were missing. Still, Lord Ranganatha's royal mood never fades away, he with the same attitude occupies the throne and commands his servants.

Once in Sri Rangam during the time of Sri Ramanuja, one of the important festivals in the temple was organized, Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar performed his service to Lord in an animated way explaining the Pashurams of Azhwars to Lord Ranganatha, who was sitting in his royal throne, and all the Vaishnavas and Sri Ramanujacharya was personally present in the assembly. When Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar explaining the Pashuram of one of the azhwar, in which azhwar is explaining Krishna's pastime with his cowherd boyfriends while playing in the forests of Vrindavana, he used to play a trick on them and make them afraid, he uses to raise his eyebrow and create a fear among them using his eyeball moments. This is one of the meanings of the Pashuram, which Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar explained the meaning of Pashuram to the Lord in his service. But, this is not agreeable to Koorathazhwan, who was seating in the same assembly and Koorathazhwan just indicated to Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar by hands has conch and discus holding Lord Narayana, immediately Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar changed his way of explaining the Pashurams and corrected it and started to explain the meaning of particular Pashuram has instead of telling the meaning like Krishna made the cowherd boyfriends fearful by eyebrows, he made them fearful showing them his Lord Narayana form with conch and discus. This is watched by Sri Ramanuja who asked for an explanation and Koorathazhwan explained the meaning of the Pashurams and Azhwar's mood in previous Pashurams. Then Sri Ramanuja appreciated the Koorathazhwan intelligence and Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar's immediate correction just by a small indication without any words. These kinds of pastimes use to occur among devotees and Lord Ranganatha, who use to adore the royal throne, enjoys all these pastimes with his devotees and also enjoys multi-flavor of his own pastimes, which is described by Azhwars, saints, sages, etc…

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Simhasanastha – One who adores the royal throne."

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Holy Name 22: Bhagavat

Mantra: Om Bhagavathe namah

Meaning – One who grants auspiciousness

Pastime – In Satya Yuga, King Suratha Keerthi lived a prosperous life and took care of his citizens has his children, but he had one unfulfilled wish and He did not have a child, who can continue his legacy also it is said that in Satya Yuga, to please Lord Vishnu, the method is to do meditation until he handover his Kingdom, he can't proceed or progress in his life by dedicated his life and without handing over, he can't leave the Kingdom, that will bring the ill name to him, deliberating all this in mind and he completely perturbed. In this situation, Narada Maharishi understood the problem of King Suratha Keerthi and he suggested a way to please Lord Vishnu and get a noble child to continue his

legacy, on the instruction of Narada Rishi King Suratha Keerthi came, with his wife, to the place where Lord Ranganatha was sleeping under his serpent bed Adhisesha and as per instruction of Narada Rishi he undertook penance at the place. Pleased with his penance and devotion, to answer his prayers Lord Vishnu appeared as Lord Ranganatha, and Lord blessed him with four noble children. Very pleased with the mercy of Lord Ranganatha, he established the temple of Lord Ranganatha, which is currently known has Adi Thiruvarangam because this Ranganatha temple is much before Sri Rangam, Ranganatha Temple. After this King Suratha Keerthi took care of his children and when they grew up, he handed over the kingdom to his children and left for the forest to progress in his spiritual life, as per Vedic culture, and got liberated from this material entanglement.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Bhagavat – One who grants auspiciousness.”

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Holy Name 23: Vasudeva

Mantra: Om Vasudevaya namah

Meaning – One who hides or covers the material world by illusion (Maya)

Pastime – Sri Rangam is an island temple located in the district of Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. Between both, the shores of River Kaveri stands the majestic temple of Lord Ranganatha. Sri Rangam Dham is also referred to as Bhuloka Vaikuntam, the transcendental abode of Lord Vishnu on earth, of course, every Dham is Vaikunta. In which every atom is spiritual and we can’t perceive the transcendental nature of the Dham with our present senses, it requires special mercy of the Lord to understand the glories of Dham with purified senses. Lord Ranganatha, who is the lord of the holy abode, Sri Rangam, is none other than Supreme Lord Vasudeva.

There was a devotee, who use to stay on the shores of River Kaveri at Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. He dedicated his entire life to the service of Vaishnavas. Even though he was born in Tiruchirappalli, he never visited the shrine of Lord Ranganatha, even touching the sand of Sri Rangam, he will stand at the shore of River Kaveri and pray to Lord Ranganatha by standing in Tiruchirappalli itself, his only service is to serve the pilgrims, whoever comes for Sri Rangam Yatra, he uses to hoist them and serve them with all the necessary things and take their blessings and after that pilgrims will continue their journey to have the darshan of Lord Ranganatha by crossing Kaveri River. This was going on for quite a long time, one fine day a pilgrim arrived at the house of a devotee and stayed for that evening, and planned to visit Sri Rangam the next day.

After the meal, the pilgrim spoke to a devotee and enquired about Sri Rangam, the devotee told the glories of Sri Rangam Dham to the pilgrim, mesmerized by the explanation, the pilgrim glorified the position of the devotee stating that a “Fortunate person is you, you have opportunity to visit the holy Dham frequently, even every day and have the darshan of Lord Ranganatha.” By saying this, the pilgrim was about to offer his respects to the devotee, then the devotee stopped him and said that he never had the darshan of Lord Ranganatha in his entire life and had not stepped on the dust of Sri Rangam Dham. The moment the pilgrim heard this, he was completely shocked, because all over the world, people come to have darshan of Lord Ranganatha, here is the person, who stays in the vicinity

of the Dham but never had darshan of Lord Ranganatha. The pilgrim became angry and said, “You are the most unfortunate person, why do you not have darshan? You are so sinful person? Why I had come to your house?” To the questions of a pilgrim, the devotee answered in calm mind, “I heard that the Sri Rangam Dham is Bhuloka Vaikuntam and there every atom is Shalagrama Shila, so I don’t want to keep my leg on the Dham.” Hearing the words of a devotee, the pilgrim thought, the devotee is sentimental and he tried to convince him to visit the Sri Rangam Dham, at last, the devotee refused and requested only one thing from the pilgrim, “if at all you want to help me in some way, please bring little dust from Sri Rangam Dham.” The pilgrim also doesn’t want to bother him much, so he went and had darshan of Lord Ranganatha and stayed in Sri Rangam for a couple of days while returning, just in time he remembered the request of the devotee and took some dust from Sri Rangam and tied it in the cloth and crossed Kaveri River and reached this side of the shore.

Way back again the pilgrim visited the house of the devotee and shared his experience of visiting Sri Rangam Dham and also said that how he is simply out of sentiment and not using the great opportunity. The devotee even though left bad, humbly requested for the dust, which he has asked, the pilgrim also kept the same in the cloth and he handed over the same to the devotee, but to the surprise of the pilgrim the dust bag, which he brought was become little bigger, amused by this pilgrim opens the bag to check what is inside, to the great surprise of both, the dust from Sri Rangam Dham became a Salagrama Shilas, this mesmerized both of them, the pilgrim immediately fell at the lotus feet of a devotee and asked for forgiveness and he also understood the glories of Sri Rangam Dham and Lord Ranganatha’s real devotee, after this incident he left the place. The devotee also extremely happy by the special blessings of Lord Ranganatha started worshipping the Salagrama Shila throughout his life and at last attained the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu to serve him eternally. In this way, the devotee established the supremacy of Sri Rangam Dham and the glories of each dust particle in the Dham. That’s why in the glorification of Sri Rangam, there is a verse,

kaveri viraja seyam vaikuntham rangamandiram
sa vasudevo rangesah pratyaksham paramam padam
vimanam pranavakaram veda srungam mahatbhutam
srirangasayi bhagvan pranavartha prakasakah

Meaning: The river Kaveri is the very same Viraja River flowing in Vaikuntham and the temple in Sri Rangam is Vaikuntham itself, the abode of Vishnu. The Lord of Sri Rangam is none other than Vasudeva Himself. The Vimanam is in the form of Pranava—the life-sustaining mantra. The towers are like the Vedas and the Lord Rangasayi is enunciating the import of the Pranavam (Om).

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is none other than “Vasudeva – One who hides or covers the material world by illusion (Maya),” in this case, Supreme Lord covered the material world by illusion (Maya), so much so that the people, in general, not able to perceive the transcendental abode, Sri Rangam, and his spiritual nature. Only the selected and realized devotees of Lord Ranganatha were able to appreciate that.

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Holy Name 24: Prabha Aavrutha

Mantra: Om Prabha Aavruthaya namah

Meaning – One who is surrounded by luster or One who is effulgent

Pastime – Sri Adishankarcharya, who is an incarnation of Lord Shiva, who intern is a great devotee of Supreme Lord Vishnu, composed a Sri Rangastakam, during his visit to Sri Rangam and by having darshan of Supreme Lord Ranganatha, he was mesmerized by Sri Ranganatha's beauty and effulgence. Below are the verses of Sri Rangastakam, which reveal that Adi Sankara was overwhelmed by Lord Ranganatha swami that his mind is instantly captivated and he revels in that feeling.

(1)

Aananda Ruupe Nija Bodha Ruupe Brahma Svaruupe Shruti Muurti Ruupe
Shashaangka Ruupe Ramanniiya Ruupe Shriirangga Ruupe Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the divine form of Sri Ranganatha) that form (resting on the Adisesha) absorbed in bliss (Ananda Rupe), and immersed in his own self (Nija Bodha Rupe); that form embodying the essence of brahman (Brahma Svarupe) and the essence of all the shrutis (Vedas) (Shruti Murti Rupe), that form cool like the moon (Shashanka Rupe) and having exquisite beauty (Ramaniya Rupe); My mind delights in the divine form of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (that form fills my being with bliss).

(2)

Kaaveri Tiire Karunnaa Vilole Mandaara Muule Dhrta Caaru Kele
Daitya Anta Kaale [A]khila Loka Liile Shriirangga Liile Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the divine plays of Sri Ranganatha) those plays of him, showering compassion at the bank of river Kaveri (just like its gentle waves); those plays of him assuming beautiful sportive forms at the root of the Mandara tree,
those plays of his incarnations slaying the demons in all the lokas (Worlds); My mind delights in the divine plays of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (those plays fill my being with bliss).

(3)

Lakssmii Nivaase Jagataam Nivaase Hrt Padma Vaase Ravi Bimba Vaase
Krpaa Nivaase Gunna Brnda Vaase Shriirangga Vaase Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the various abodes of Sri Ranganatha) that abode of him dwelling with devi Lakshmi (in Vaikuntha), those abodes of him dwelling amidst all the beings in this world (in temples), that abode of him within the lotus of the hearts of the devotees (as divine consciousness), and that abode of him within the orb of the sun (the sun representing the image of the divine), that abode of him in the acts of compassion, and that abode of him within the excellent virtues; My mind delights in the various abodes of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (those abodes fill my being with bliss).

(4)

Brahmaa [Aa]di Vandye Jagad Eka Vandye Mukunda Vandye Sura Naatha Vandye
Vyaasaa [Aa]di Vandye Sanaka [A]adi Vandye Shriirangga Vandye Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the worship of Sri Ranganatha) The worship performed by lord Brahma and other (gods); The worship performed by the devotees (considering him) as the one lord of the universe; The worship performed by Sri Mukunda, and the worship performed by the chief of the Suras (i.e. Indra deva), The worship performed by Sage Vyasa and other (Sages); The worship performed by Sage Sanaka and other (Kumaras); My mind delights in the worship of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (His worship fills my being with bliss).

(5)

Brahmaa [A]dhiraaje Garudda Adhiraaje Vaikunnttha Raaje Sura Raaja Raaje
Trailokya Raaje [A]khila Loka Raaje Shriirangga Raaje Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the lordship of Sri Ranganatha) Who is the lord of Brahma, who is the lord of Garuda, who is the lord of Vaikuntha and who is the lord of the king of Suras (i.e. Indra Deva), who is the lord of the three worlds, who is the lord of all the worlds; My mind delights in the lordship of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (His lordship fills my being with bliss).

(6)

Amogha Mudre Paripuurnna Nidre Shrii Yoga Nidre Sa Samudra Nidre
Shritai[a E]ka Bhadre Jagad Eka Nidre Shriirangga Bhadre Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the auspicious divine sleep of Sri Ranganatha) that posture of unfailing rest (which nothing can disturb), that complete sleep (which is full with fullness), that auspicious Yoga Nidra (which is absorbed in itself in fullness), (and) that posture of sleeping over the milky ocean (and controlling everything), that posture of rest is the one source of auspiciousness (in the universe) and one great sleep which (gives rest amidst all the activities and) finally absorbs the universe, my mind delights in the auspicious divine sleep of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (that auspicious divine sleep fills my being with bliss).

(7)

Sacitra Shaayii Bhujage[a I]ndra Shaayii Nanda Angka Shaayii Kamalaa [A]ngka Shaayii
Kssiira Abdhi Shaayii Vatta Patra Shaayii Shriirangga Shaayii Ramataam Mano Me

Meaning: (My mind delights in the auspicious resting poses of Sri Ranganatha) that resting pose adorned with variegated (garments and ornaments); that resting pose over the king of serpents (i.e. Adisesha); that resting pose on the lap of Nanda Gopa (and Yashoda); that resting pose on the lap of devi Lakshmi, that resting pose over the Milky Ocean; (and) that resting pose over the banyan leaf; My mind delights in the auspicious resting poses of Sri Ranga (Sri Ranganatha) (that auspicious resting poses fill my being with bliss).

(8)

Idam Hi Ranggam Tyajataam Iha Anggam Punar Na Ca Anggam Yadi Ca Anggam Eti
Paannau Rathaanggam Caranne [A]mbu Gaanggam Yaane Vihanggam Shayane Bhujanggam

Meaning: This indeed is Ranga (Srirangam), where if anyone sheds his body, will not come back again with the body (i.e. will not be born again), if that body had approached the lord (i.e. taken refuge in the lord), (Glory to Sri Ranganatha) whose hand holds the discus, from whose lotus feet river Ganga originates, who rides on his bird vehicle (Garuda); (and) who sleeps on the bed of serpent (glory to Sri Ranganatha).

(9)

Rangganaatha Assttakam Punnyam Praatar Utthaaya Yah Patthet
Sarvaan Kaamaan Avaapnoti Ranggi Saayujyam Aapnuyaat

Meaning: This Ranganathashtakam, which is auspicious, he who recites after getting up early in the morning, all his desires are fulfilled; (and finally) he attains the sayujya of Sri Ranganatha (absorption in the essence of Sri Ranganatha) (and gets liberated).

(10)

iti srimacchaṅkaracaryaviracitam sriraṅganathastakam sampurnam

Meaning: Thus completes Sri Rangastakam composed by Srimad Adi Shankaracharya.

Srimad Adi Shankaracharya sings in praise of Sri Ranganatha Swamy in 8 slokas, of which 7 of them end with the words ‘Ramathaam manomay’. He is immensely captivated by the Lord and he sings by bringing out all the attributes in every word.

In the first sloka he addresses the lord as the cause of all happiness (Aananda roopay), pure consciousness (nijabodha roopay), and manifestation of the ultimate truth (brahma swaroopay) and as the embodiment of the learnings of the Vedas (srutimoorthi roopay) and says that his mind is reveling in Lord Ranganatha.

River Kaveri finds mention in the second sloka. We can visualize Srimad Adi Shankaracharya taking a holy dip in Kaveri before going to offer worship to Sri Ranganatha, as any devotee would. He addresses Sri Ranganatha as extremely merciful (karuna vilolay) and as the lord of all times (Daithyaantha kaalay) and that the whole world sings in praise of Sri Ranganatha (akhila loka leelay).

In the third, he addresses Sri Ranganatha as he in whom Goddess Lakshmi resides (Lakshmi nivaasay) and in whom the whole world resides (jagathaam nivaasay). This is a reference to Purusha Sooktham in which is said that the whole world emanates from the Lord (Sahasra sheersha purushah….). Jagatguru sees Sri Ranganatha in everything around him – in the sunshine around him (ravi bimba vaasay) and in the heart of every devotee! The fulfillment that Jagatguru

experiences when he is standing in front of Sri Ranganatha can be visualized by the flowery language that he uses.

The deity of Sri Ranganatha which is in Srirangam was first worshipped by Lord Brahma himself, before passing it onto the kings of Ikshwaku clan which is born Lord Ram. After defeating Ravana in the war, Lord Ram thanks Vibheeshana by gifting the deity of Sri Ranganatha to him. But en route from Ayodhya to Sri Lanka, Vibheeshana stops at Srirangam on seeing a big crowd on the banks of Kaveri. The deity of Sri Ranganatha stays put there and Vibheeshana leaves for Sri Lanka as he could not carry it from Srirangam. Most temples are facing east but in Srirangam, Sri Ranganatha is facing south, looking at Sri Lanka. A reference to the fact that Sri Ranganatha was worshipped by Brahma, Vyasa, Indra, Sanakaathi rishis, and by every devotee in the world is brought out in the 4th and 5th slokas.

Sri Ranganatha is in blissful sleep on the bed (paripoorna nidray) provided by the body of Anantha or the serpent king, in the milky ocean – Paalaazhi. Goddess Lakshmi is at his feet (srithaika bhadray). These attributes find mentioned in the 6th sloka.

References to Lord Krishna's childhood could be found in the 7th sloka – of sleeping on the lap of Nandagopa, his foster father (nandaanga sayee). Sri Ranganatha, who sleeps with his head resting on his right arm (bhujagendra sayee) is the one who slept on Nandagopa's lap, on the leaf of peepal tree (vata pathra sayee) and he is referred to as the one who sleeps in the milky ocean (ksheeraabdi sayee).

After singing in praise of Sri Ranganatha in the first 7 slokas by mentioning his attributes, Adi Sankara Bhagavatpada praises Srirangam, in the 8th sloka as the place where if a devotee leaves his body, will attain liberation. Being a follower of Mayavada (Impersonalism), he concluded the prayers by stating that those who faithfully recite these verses daily will get sayujya, but as the supreme devotee of Lord Ranganatha, Lord Shiva's (Shankarcharya's) verses will bestow the people with service to the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha.

The 'phalasruti' – the benefit of singing Sri Ranganatha Ashtakam is mentioned outside of the octet. The devotee who sings this in the morning will fulfill his wishes and will attain the abode of Sri Ranganatha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Prabha Aavrutha – One who is surrounded by luster or One who is effulgent," so much so that, the great impersonalist, Adi Shankaracharya mesmerized by the effulgence and beauty of Lord composed the verses, Sri Rangastakam.

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Holy Name 25: Kandharpakoti Lavanya

Mantra: Om Kandharpakoti lavanyaya namah

Meaning – One who is as pretty as crores of God of love (Cupid)

Pastime – It was a time when the atrocities of the Muslim invaders were reaching heights. Their hatred for deity worship made the Hindus tremble, not in fear for their lives, but in fear of the possible damages that the holy deities in

their hallowed temples would suffer. Drastic measures were made to save the deities from disrespect. The ruthless Muslims used to destroy the deities and if that was not possible, deface them. The smaller utsavar deities made of the expensive Panchaloha were carried off in large heaps to Delhi, to be melted into new ornaments. The priests did their very best to cover the sanctum with bricks and send the smaller deities for safekeeping with trusted families. The Muslim forces, however, kept driving further south in conquest.

Headed by Malik Kafur, the crushing army came to the banks of the Kaveri. On an island between the Kaveri and Kollidam stood a magnificent temple, gleaming with riches. Sri Rangam, the holy abode of Lord Ranganatha. Malik Kafur was astonished by the grandeur of the temple and by its sheer size. But his instincts immediately kicked in. “Charge”, he thundered and his army broke into the largest functioning temple complex in the world.

So huge was Sri Rangam that Malik Kafur took days going around the Prakarams, plundering the people. The inner temple was fiercely protected by the staunch Vaishnavas, who refused to let the Muslims defile their holiest shrine. They held out the army for three days, time sufficient enough to build a wall in front of the main sannidhi and to hide out the reclining god. The priests even managed to bury the utsavar of Ranganayaki under a neem tree, but alas, before they could save the utsavar of Ranganathar, the army broke in. They killed everyone in sight, took the utsavar, and marched back to Delhi.

The whole city of Sri Rangam wore a forlorn look. People mourned the deaths of their near and dear. More so, they mourned the loss of the utsavar from their temple. A few brave, bright men came forward and vowed to bring back the deity from Delhi. “We will not return without Lord Ranganatha”, they said and over the next few days, they hatched their master plan. A couple of days later, the group set out to Delhi, disguised as an entertainment troop.

Meanwhile, at the palace of Malik Kafur in Delhi, strange things were afoot. When the soldiers brought in the deity, the daughter of Malik Kafur, Princess Surathani, was overwhelmed by the charming face of Lord Ranganatha. “Baapa”, she called out to her father, “Can I have this sweet deity as my doll? I like him a lot. Please do not melt him too.”, she begged. Malik Kafur allowed her to play with the deity and Surathani immediately carried him to her room. Over the next few weeks, Surathani never used to be away from Lord Ranganatha. She bathed the deity, dressed it, offered food, and even slept with the deity. Pleased with her acts of love, Lord Ranganatha used to appear before her every night and offer her darshan in various forms. Without actually realizing it, Surathani fell in love with Lord Ranganatha.

The entertainment troop from Sri Rangam finally reached Delhi and asked for permission to perform before the sultan. When the permission was granted, on a sacred Ekadashi day, they performed before Malik Kafur’s court. They put up their best dance and song skills and ultimately won the sultan’s liking. Malik Kafur was so overjoyed by the performance, that in return he gave them what they expected. “You have been excellent, just excellent. For your talent, I offer you anything within the confines of this palace. You are free to take anything”, he offered. “Shahen shah”, said the lead man, bowing deeply, “we would like to have the statue of Lord Ranganatha back. That is all that we need.” “You got it”, granted Malik Kafur and walked away. The troop, however, knew that the princess was deeply involved with the deity and that she would make a fuss if

they took it away. So they waited for night to come upon, and when the princess was deep in sleep, they retrieved the deity and started off the city.

They ran as fast as their carts could take them, lest the sultan sent his army behind. But to their bad luck, Surathani was so distressed to find her deity gone, that she immediately jumped onto her horse and followed the entertainment troop. Malik Kafur followed with his humungous army. Frightened by the army, the troop split into various smaller groups and decided to meet back in Sri Rangam. The man carrying the deity, his father, and his son, ran into a dense forest and lost their way. The grandfather soon succumbed to the shock of the past few days and attained the lotus feet of Vishnu. The child too tripped and fell into a deep ravine, and ultimately reached Vaikuntha. Now, this was too much for the man carrying the deity. He lost his senses and became mad. Lacking any interest in life he wandered around the forest. He wandered and wandered…

Back at Sri Rangam however, Surathani searched all over for the deity. Not finding it, she gave up her life before the very doors of the sanctum. Seeing this, Malik Kafur was so enraged that he ordered every Vaishnava to be killed. A bloody war followed in which close to 13000 Vaishnavas lost their life. The beautiful Devadasis of the temple, finally, managed to seduce the army generals and sent them back home.

The temple somehow survived the catastrophe. But a lot of things were not in order. The utsavar was not with them and the temple festivities had to go on. The head priests, then secretly ordered another identical utsavar to be made and installed, saying that this indeed was the original one.

Lord Ranganatha also appeared in the head priest’s dreams and pronounced that he had now taken Surathani to be his wife. She too had to be given all the respect that was given to the other Naachiyaars. The Bhattar then conveyed this dream to the temple head. A shrine was built for the Muslim wife of Lord Ranganatha. Since Islam shuns deity worship, she was worshipped in the form of a painting, richly decorated with gems and gold, and is still worshipped today.

So even today, in Sri Rangam, at the main shrine, we can see two utsavars receiving worship. Also, the shrine to Surathani is found near the Arjuna Mandapa, next to the main sanctum and she is lovingly called Thulukka Nachiyar. Once a year, the Kalyana utsavam of Thulukka Naachiyaar with Lord Ranganatha is celebrated with great pomp and show. In testimony to her unflinching love, to this day, Lord Ranganatha’s breakfast offering consists of Butter Roti’s and Sugar, cooked Mughal style. They are first offered to the Thulukka Nachiyar and then only offered to Lord Ranganatha.

And so, the temple continues to exist, with all its grandeur refurbished and shining bright, the Thulukka Naachiyar shrine is a standing example of what true devotion and love are actually supposed to be.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Kandharpakoti Lavanya – One who is as pretty as crores of God of love (Cupid),” charming beauty of Lord Ranganatha is so much so that, even the Islamic princess was attracted to him.

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Holy Name 26: Kasthuri tilaka

Mantra: Om Kasthuri tilakaya namah

Meaning – One whose forehead is the mark of tilaka, mixed with musk

Pastime – Once when King Virasundara Brahmaraya, who use to rule the local province and informs the disciples of Kuratazhwan that he wants to build a wall in Sri Rangam. The King decides to destroy the house of Pillai Pillai Azhwan in the process of building a wall. Parasara Bhattar instructs him not to do that but the King does not listen to that. Parasara Bhattar leaves Sri Rangam, due to the bad behavior of the King and goes to Thirukkoshtiyur and lives there for some time under the shelter of Lord Sowmya Narayana. But, Parasara Bhattar is unable to bear the separation from Lord Ranganatha and is plunged into sorrow. Finally, after the death of the King, Parasara Bhattar returns to Sri Rangam. But, meanwhile, during his stay in Thirukkoshtiyur, the great love he had for Sri Ranganatha and the anguish he had because he was forced to stay away from his Supreme Lord were poured out in the form of a composition named Sri Ranganatha Stotram, in which the great feeling of separation was amply reflected in the verses, especially the first verse and first feeling of Parasara Bhattar as poured out as,

kasthuri kalith oordhwa pundra thilakam, karnantha lolekshanam
mugdha smera manohara daradalam, mukthaa kiretojjwalam
pasyan manasa pasyatho hararucha, paryaya pangeruham
sri rangadhipathe kadanuvadanam, seveya bhooyamyaham

Meaning: When will I be able to see and salute that Lord Ranganatha, who wears long pundarika (tilaka) of musk, has mischievous eyes extending to the ears, always has a pretty smile, has beautiful lips, wears the gem-studded crown, and having a lotus-like face which bewitches all those who see him?

From this composition and incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Kasthuri tilaka – One whose forehead is the mark of tilaka, mixed with musk,” this tilaka is so mesmerizing that, out of all the aspects of Lord Ranganatha, Sri Parasara Bhattar first remembered and lamented to see the face of Supreme Lord Ranganatha, which is marked with the beautiful tilaka mixed with musk.

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Holy Name 27: Achyutha

Mantra: Om Achyuthaya namah

Meaning – One who never falls from his position or infallible one

Pastime – Sri Parasara Bhattar, who was a great Acharya in Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, and a great devotee of Lord Ranganatha and surrendered at his lotus feet and resided in Sri Rangam. Once Sri Parasara Bhattar was passing through a jungle. Darkness fell, and Parasara Bhattar needed to rest somewhere a hunter invited him into his hut for the night. Bhattar asked the hunter if anything interesting had happened to him in his life. The hunter thereupon narrated an incident.

One day, the hunter spotted a baby rabbit gamboling among the bushes in the jungle. It seemed to the hunter to be easy prey. So he decided to kill it. As he

aimed, the mother rabbit arrived, stood on its hind legs, and held out its forelegs. To the hunter, it seemed as if the mother rabbit were begging him to spare the life of her little one. Moved by the mother rabbit's appeal, the hunter desisted from killing the bunny. The hunter wondered how anyone could kill another when an appeal for protection was made.

Upon hearing the story, Parasara Bhattar wept. When he was able to recover his composure, he explained the reason for his tears. It reminded him of the potency of Saranagati (Surrender). The rabbit which appealed for mercy and protection was an animal, incapable of even enunciating its thoughts or vocalizing its feelings. The hunter was an unlettered man, not aware of the instructions of Vedic literature. The animal had merely lifted its paws when its baby was threatened, and that had been enough for the hunter to spare the life of the baby rabbit. How much more potent would be the act of Surrender to Lord Ranganatha, who promises to save us if we surrender to Him? Saranagati (Surrender) is guaranteed to result in the Lord's protection and is not difficult to resort to. That's why Supreme Lord Ranganatha is known as "Achyutha – One who never fails His devotees, who surrendered to him." After this incident, he arrives at the shrine of Lord Ranganatha and offers special prayers in the glorification of Supreme Lord Ranganatha, who is "Achyutha – infallible one".

And also, the Vedic literature (Padma Purana) states,

arcye visnau sila-dhir gurusu nara-matir vaisnave jati-buddhir
visnor va vaisnavanam kali-mala-mathane pada-tirthe 'mbu-buddhih
sri-visnor namni mantre sakala-kalusa-he sabda-samanya-buddhir
visnau sarvesvarese tad-itara-sama-dhir yasya va naraki sah

Meaning: One who thinks the Deity in the temple to be made of wood or stone, who thinks of the spiritual master in the disciplic succession as an ordinary man, who thinks the Vaisnava in the Achyuta-gotra to belong to a certain caste or creed or who thinks of Charanamrta or Ganges water as ordinary water is taken to be a resident of hell.

According to this, all the devotees of the Lord belong to the Achyuta-Gotra irrespective of their color, caste, creed, etc… and always they were mentioned like that, the reason is they took shelter at the lotus feet of Lord Achyuta (Infallible one or He who never fails His devotees and who never falls from His position).

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Holy Name 28: Sankha chakra gadha padma sulakshitha cathurbuja

Mantra: Om Sankha chakra gadha padma sulakshitha chathur bujayai namah

Meaning – One who carries in his four arms, a conch, wheel, mace, and lotus flower

Pastime – It is known that Parasara Bhattar is very much attached to the deity of Lord Ranganatha and at the same time attached to the incarnations of the Supreme Lord as Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, etc… have two hands. Keeping this in mind once Ananthazhwan asks Parasara Bhattar in a jolly mood. Lord of Vaikunata has two hands or four hands. Parasara Bhattar understood the mood of Ananthazhwan and at the same time, he wants to confirm is attachment to

Lord Ranganatha. So Parasara Bhattar says it can be either one and says if Lord has two hands he will be like Periya Perumal (Lord Ranganatha, the Main deity of the Sri Rangam Temple) and if he has four hands with Shanka (conch), Chakra (wheel), Gada (mace), and Padma (lotus flower), he will be like Lord Namperumal (Utsava deity of Lord Ranganatha in the Sri Rangam Temple). In this way, he showed his attachment to Lord Ranganatha of Sri Rangam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sankha chakra gadha padma sulakshitha cathurbuja – One who carries in his four arms, a conch, wheel, mace, and lotus flower."

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Holy Name 29: Sundarajamatha

Mantra: Om Sundara jamathre namah

Meaning – One who is the pretty son-in-law (son-in-law of Nandha Cholan, Kulasekhara Azhwar, Periya Azhwar, etc…)

Pastime – Kulashekara Azhwar's devotion increased manifold after he saw Lord Rama in person and he was determined to renounce his royal life and retire to Sri Rangam to serve Lord Ranganatha while staying there. The ministers got to know about their beloved king's plans and became worried. The ministers came up with a plan to make Kulashekara Azhwar abandon his plans to retire. And they executed the plan to defame Vaishnavas. Kulashekara Azhwar got fed up with his ministers for hatching a conspiracy to malign the Vaishnavas and did not want to stay with them in the palace. He decided to renounce his kingdom and retire to Sri Rangam. Kulashekara-Azhwar summoned his son Drida-Vrata, who was named after his father, and anointed Drida-Vrata as the king of the land.

Kulashekara Azhwar retired to Sri Rangam along with his daughter Chera Kulavalli, who was very devoted to the Lord and is believed to be a part manifestation of Nila-Devi, one of the Lord's consorts. Kulashekara Azhwar started living like a common man and serving Lord Ranganatha. While staying in Sri Rangam, Kulashekara Azhwar frequently went on pilgrimages to Thiruvengadam, Thirunagari, and other places.

Kulashekara Azhwar was so moved by the Lord of Sri Rangam and the devotion of the residents that he dedicated the first thirty Pashurams of his Perumal Thirumozhi to the Lord and his devotees at Sri Rangam. With each passing Pashurams, Kulashekara Azhwar, from being a new entrant to this temple town showcases how well-entrenched he had become at this sacred town and how he now knew the Lord very well. Kulashekara Azhwar ends his Perumal Thirumozhi with 30 Pashurams dedicated to Lord Rama including narrating the entire Ramayana in the final 10 Pashurams. So heart-warming was his experience here in Sri Rangam that he wanted to give the hand of his daughter to the Lord of Sri Rangam.

Chera Kulavalli is the daughter of the noble King and devotee Kulashekara Azhwar and has the same as her father, she is also fully devoted to Lord Ranganatha. Has an Incarnation of Nila Devi, the consort of Lord Narayana, she wished to marry Lord Ranganatha only, Understanding the desire of Chera Kulavalli and also to honor Kulashekara Azhwar devotion, Sri Ranganatha marries

Chera Kulavalli on the day of Sri Rama Navami, the appearance day of Lord Rama.

Kulashekara-Azhwar married his daughter to Lord Ranganatha at the behest of the Lord and continued to stay in Sri Rangam. Due to Kulashekara Azhwar's intense love for Lord Rama and considered the form of Lord Ranganatha as Lord Rama, he married his daughter on the day of Rama Navami, the appearance day of Lord Ramachandra.

Now also to commemorate this pastime of the marriage of Lord Ranganatha and Chera Kulavalli Nachiyar, on Rama Namavi Day, the special procession is conducted for them in Sri Rangam Temple. During this occasion, Kulashekara Azhwar's daughter is seated alongside Lord Namperumal, the Utsava deity of Lord Ranganatha. Both Chera Kulavalli Nachiyar and Sri Ranganatha have Abhishekam and a special procession on that day. Arayar animated way will chant Pashurams or songs from Perumal Thirumozhi of Kulashekara Azhwar. Chera Kulavalli Altar is there near Arjuna Mantapam of the Sri Rangam temple complex and very close to Chandra Pushkarini. Further, Lord married a daughter of King Nandha Cholan named Kamavalli Nachiyar at Uraiyur and a daughter of Periya Azhwar named Andal at Srivilliputur, etc.... In this way, Lord Ranganatha became a pretty son-in-law of King Nandha Cholan, Kulasekhara Azhwar, Periya Azhwar, etc... That's why, Lord Ranganatha is known as "Sundarajamatha – One who is the pretty son-in-law (son-in-law of Nandha Cholan, Kulasekhara Azhwar, Periya Azhwar, etc...)."

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Holy Name 30: Nadha

Mantra: Om Nadhaya namah

Meaning – One who is the master and protector

Pastime – Sri Vedavyasa Bhattar is one of the sons of Sri Kuratalwan, the prominent disciple of Sri Ramanuja. The Divya Dampathis (Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Sri Ranga Nachiyar) themselves acted like parents for him, as he was born after his mother, Sri Andal, consumed "Prasadam" from the Sri Rangam temple. It is said that Sri Alavandar and Sri Ramanujar prayed before the Sri Rangam Ranganatha Perumal to bless the Acharya lineage by bringing a child to this world, fit enough to be named after the great sage Sri Parasara and Sri Vyasadeva. Those children are Sri Parasara Bhattar and Sri Vedavyasa Bhattar.

After the disappearance of Sri Ramanuja, Sri Parasara Bhattar took in-charge of the entire Srivaishnava clan. During then, once Sri Parasara Bhattar identified that his noble brother Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar was going through some difficulty, he explains to him the principle that by quoting a particular verse of Thondaradippodi Azhwar, which explains that Lord Ranganatha is the eternal relative for everyone and he will protect us at all times and asks him to fully depend on Lord Ranagnatha and he will protect us at all times. Similarly, Sri Vedavyasa Bhattar led his life depending completely on Supreme Lord Ranganatha.

Of the two brothers, Sri Parasara Bhattar lived for a short period and left for Sri Vaikunta out of a great desire to reach the Vaikunta, the spiritual world, by leaving the material world. Andal, the mother of transcendental brothers was

magnanimous during the last moments of Parasara Bhattar and oversees Parasara Bhattar's final rites blissfully considering Parasara Bhattar himself wanted to go to Sri Vaikunta to perform eternal service to Lord Narayana there. On completion of the final rites, Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar returns home and starts crying out loud out of separation from his brother Sri Parasara Bhattar. Andal at once chastises Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar and asks if he is jealous of Sri Parasara Bhattar ascending to Sri Vaikunta. Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar realizes his mistake at once, consoles himself, begs his mother for pardon, and continues the great celebrations for Sri Parasara Bhattar. Then Lord Ranganatha invites Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar over to his shrine and tells him "Don't think that Sri Parasara Bhattar has left you. I am here for you as your father, master, and protector. Be rest assured" Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar then leads the Sampradaya with other stalwarts such as Nanjeeyar.

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Nadha – One who is the master and protector."

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Holy Name 31: Devashikamani

Mantra: Om Deva shikamanaya namah

Meaning – One who is the crown jewel of the Demigods

Pastime – Kochengat Cholan, who had constructed over 70 Madakovils for Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva, is the foremost of all the Vaishnavas and it is proclaimed in all the Vedas. Anyone, who is a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva, but inclined to get liberation from material entanglement, Lord Shiva personally guides them to the Lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. A well-known example is Markandeya Rishi. Similarly, Kochengat Cholan is a King and follower of Lord Shiva. By the mercy of Lord Shiva, he received the blessing of Lord Vishnu.

One-night King Kochengat Cholan got a dream, Lord Vishnu came into his dream and asked him the reason for neglecting Him and only constructing the temple for Lord Shiva and also Lord Vishnu instructed him about his supremacy over all the demigods like Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma. Then Lord Vishnu directed King Kochengat Cholan to take up the renovation work of the Sri Rangam temple and also construct another temple for Him in the Kaveri belt. Here the point that needs to be considered is that Lord Vishnu, who is an Atma Rama and to serve him millions of them are waiting and millions of Lakshmidevi are waiting to serve Lord Vishnu. But, Lord Vishnu directed King Kochengat Cholan, and the reason is very simple. Lord Vishnu taught to purify King Kochengat Cholan by engaging in his service.

When King Kochengat Cholan woke up from the dream, he felt both happy and sad, because of neglecting the service of Lord Hari when he was doing everything for Lord Shiva, forgetting the basic principle that Lord Vishnu is the supreme Lord of all the demigods including Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma.

On the order of Supreme Lord Vishnu, he immediately took up the Sri Rangam temple renovation work and did many services to Sri Rangam Temple, and also he sent the expert priests to select a proper place for erecting a new temple for Lord Vishnu at the shores of Kaveri River. They finally found the place, where both Mayan and Viswakarma, the sculptors or architects for Demons and

Demigods respectively had worshipped Lord Vishnu, the experts decided that it would be the ideal place to construct the new temple. Then King Kochengat Cholan constructed the temple at that place, presently the temple is known as Seethakkamangalam Sri Pallikonda Mangala Ranganatha Temple.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Devashikamani – One who is the crown jewel of the Demigods,” in this case, Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) personally appeared to the King to show him this fact, which he forgot.

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Holy Name 32: Sri Ranga Nayaka

Mantra: Om Sri Ranga nayakaya namah

Meaning - One who is the leader of the holy abode, Sri Rangam

Pastime – Many young boys in Sri Rangam used to gather around Parashara Bhattar, the eldest of the two sons of Kuresha when Parashara Bhattar was hardly five years old. Even his teachers were impressed with his brilliance. Once, a reputed scholar called Sarvajna Bhatta visited Sri Rangam. Sarvajna Bhatta’s disciples and servants used to carry him on a palanquin and a drummer used to go in the front announcing the arrival of Sarvajna Bhatta and singing his glories. Parashara, who was playing with his friends, heard the praises that were showered on his master by the drummer and said, “How can one claim to be a Sarvajna in the presence of Supreme Lord Ranganatha? And during Ramanuja’s presence? Even great scholars like Dasarathi, Govinda, and my dear father (Kuresha), who have mastered many subjects, consider themselves to be his slaves. This impudence should not go unchallenged.”

Though Parashara was hardly five years old, he went up to Sarvajna Bhatta’s palanquin, picked up a fistful of sand, and said, “Your people claim that you are a Sarvajna, which means one who knows everything. If you know everything please tell me how much sand I have in my hand?” Being stunned at the question posed by a young boy, Sarvajna Bhatta said, “How can one know how much sand you have in your hand unless one counts them?”

Parashara laughingly said, “I have a fistful of sand in my hand and I have told it without counting. Do not claim that you are a Sarvajna in Sri Rangam unless you know everything. Only the omniscient Supreme Lord can be called Sarvajna, despite being an incarnation Sri Ramanuja claims himself to be a humble servant of the Lord of Sri Rangam and also his guru, Yamunacharya. All the other scholars, who are capable of defeating anyone in a debate, in this town consider him (Lord Ranganatha) as their master and leader.”

Saying so, Parashara went back to play with his friends. Sarvajna Bhatta was stunned and he realized his mistake. He asked his drummer to stop announcing his arrival and glories wherever he went. Sarvajna Bhatta got down from his palanquin and walked back the way he had come.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Sri Ranga Nayaka - One who is the leader of the holy abode, Sri Rangam,” in that abode (Sri Rangam), no one else can proclaim themselves as the leader except Lord Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 33: Lakshmi Vallabha

Mantra: Om Lakshmi Vallabhaya namah

Meaning – One who is the consort of Goddess Lakshmi

Pastime – From the heredity of King Dharma Varma Cholan came a King called Nandha Cholan, ruling the Chola Dynasty with Uraiyur as a Capital. He was also an adorn devotee of Lord Ranganatha of Sri Rangam. He ruled his Dynasty prosperously and every citizen there was happy and the Dynasty was prosperous. Only the King has a problem that he doesn't have a child. Lord Vishnu asked Goddess Mahalakshmi to become the child of King Nandha Cholan.

Later Nandha Cholan saw the devotion of his daughter Kamalavalli and married her to Sri Ranganatha. In memory of his daughter's marriage with Lord Ranganatha, he built a temple in his capital Uraiyur. Lord Ranganatha with the name Azhagiya Manavaalan resided with Kamalavalli Nachiyar in Thiru-uraiyur.

Getting to know about the Lord's trip to Uraiyur to meet Kamalavalli Nachiyar and marry her and presenting His ring to the Kamalavalli Nachiyar, Ranganayaki Thayar fumes with anger. To commentate on this pastime, on the occasion of Panguni Uthiram (the fifth day of Panguni), Namperumal (Lord Ranganatha) decides to meet Ranganayaki Thayar at her sannidhi located on the Northern side of the Srirangam temple. To convince Ranganayaki, it is believed that, the Lord goes around the Chitra and Uthira streets to meet the devotees and collect money to buy a new ring for Thayar.

After over three hours, Namperumal reaches the Thayar Sannidhi. As if waiting for a chance, Ranganayaki shuts the door refusing Him entry into the Sannidhi. The Lord's repeated attempts to move into the sannidhi fail. To top it all, He is even pelted with butter and fruits from the other side.

A war of words ensues between the two with the Lord trying his best to convince Thayar of his commitment to her. During the 90-minute debate, which was one of the biggest highlights of the Panguni Uthiram festival, the Araiyars represented Nammazhwar as the mediator between the Lord (waiting outside the entrance of the Thaayar Sannidhi) and Thayar.

After an intense debate, with Namperumal trying unsuccessfully to convince Thayar, Nammazhwar, who had been closely watching the drama, intervenes and advises the Goddess to accept the Lord once again. Immediately, accepting this directive, Ranganayaki relents – "Lord, I accept you as directed by Nammazhwar, please come in."

This heated debate between the two and the way it ends, with Thayar accepting the Lord again, showcases to the world the beautiful relationship between a husband and a wife.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Lakshmi Vallabha – One who is the consort of Goddess Lakshmi."

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Holy Name 34: Tejasam nidhi

Mantra: Om Tejasam nidhaye namah

Meaning – One who is the treasure of radiance or prowess

Pastime – Nathamuni, when receiving the 4000 Divya Prabhantham from Nammalvar, also received a deity of Ramanuja, instructing him to handover the deity to his yet-to-be-born grandson (Yamunacharya). When Nathamuni was about to depart to Lord's feet, he passed on the deity to Uyakkondar after extracting a promise from him that he would keep the deity in a secure place until it is handed over to his grandson. However, Nathamuni's grandson had not been born even at the time of Uyakkondar's departure to Vaikuntam. He passed on the deity to Manakal Nambi extracting from him, the same promise he had made to Nathamuni. He also instructed Manakal Nambi that he would take the responsibility of instructing Nathamuni's grandson and handing over the deity of Ramanuja. Uyyakkondar handed over the task given by his guru Nathamuni of teaching the conclusion of Shastras to his grandson Yamunacharya, to his disciple, Manakal Nambi.

Manakkal Nambi, who was waiting for an appropriate moment to initiate Yamunacharya into the Vaishnava fold following the order of his preceptor, Pundarikaksha, made many unsuccessful attempts to meet Yamunacharya, who had become a king and was very busy in governing the country. Yamunacharya was so busy that even the ministers and rich businessmen of the country had to wait for hours to meet him. Moreover, Yamunacharya’s attendants were not willing to let Manakkal Nambi meet him.

Eventually, Manakkal Nambi devised a plan to draw Yamunacharya’s attention. He convinced Yamunacharya’s cook to prepare dishes out of Tuthuvalai (a type of green that is believed to enhance the sattva-guna in people), for the king and started regularly supplying the greens to the king’s kitchen. Yamunacharya started to like the taste of the dishes made out of Tuthuvalai and Manakkal Nambi got to know about it from the cook. After supplying the greens for a couple of months, Manakkal Nambi deliberately abstained from supplying the greens on a particular day.

Yamunacharya, who liked the dishes made out of Tuthuvalai, summoned the cook and asked him the reason for not cooking the greens. The cook said, “A sadhu had convinced me to cook Thuthuvalai regularly for you and used to supply them out of love for you without receiving any payment for his service. He told me that these greens enhance sattva guna, longevity, health, and memory power of those who eat them. Due to some unknown reason, he did not come today and I don’t know his whereabouts. Therefore, I could not cook Tuthuvalai today.” Yamunacharya asked the cook to bring the sadhu to him with due respect as soon as he found him.

Manakkal Nambi resumed his service of supplying the greens to the king the following day. The cook who was eagerly waiting for Manakkal Nambi took him to Yamunacharya who was relaxing in one of the enclosures in the palace. Yamunacharya stood up as soon as he saw Manakkal Nambi and offered his salutation. Yamunacharya said, “Swami I got to know from my cook that you have been supplying Tuthuvalai for me for the past few days without receiving anything in return and I am very grateful for the love that you have showered on

me. Could I help in any way? Please ask for whatever you want and I am ready to gratify you."

Manakkal Nambi said, "By the mercy of the Lord all my needs are met and I do not hanker for anything. I want to talk to you about something confidentially."

Yamunacharya directed his attendants and the cook to leave the enclosure offered a seat to Manakkal Nambi and requested him to reveal his mind.

Manakkal Nambi said, "I am a disciple of worshipful Natha Muni, who is your grandfather. Natha Muni has bequeathed a very big treasure to you and he entrusted me the responsibility of handing it to you. The treasure is hidden within the seven forts on a remote island and is guarded by a mighty serpent. A demon comes to visit it once every twelve years. Please accept the treasure and relieve me of the responsibility entrusted by your grandfather."

Yamunacharya felt very happy as soon as he heard Manakkal Nambi's words as he badly needed money for his expeditions. He appreciated Manakkal Nambi for not appropriating the treasure and started to praise his renunciation and agreed to take the treasure.

Excited at the prospect of getting a vast treasure, Yamunacharya decided to go along with his entire army to fetch it. Manakkal Nambi discouraged Yamunacharya from going along with his army and said, "That island is very sacred and the treasure will be revealed only to those who deserve to see it. Therefore, it is appropriate for you to accompany me alone."

Accordingly, Yamunacharya instructed his ministers to take care of the kingdom in his absence before discreetly leaving the palace along with Manakkal Nambi in disguise. After walking for some distance, Manakkal Nambi and Yamunacharya decided to rest for the day as night was approaching. After finishing his ablutions and having his supper along with Yamunacharya, Manakkal Nambi started to chant the verses of the Bhagavad-gita. Yamunacharya was captivated by the melody of the verses and the profound philosophical thoughts enshrined in them. The message of the Gita started to stir the heart and soul of Yamunacharya, who was lost in material pursuits despite being a highly learned scholar, due to his kingly duties, and rekindle his spiritual consciousness.

Yamunacharya started to request Manakkal Nambi not to stop his chanting and to explain the purport of the verses of Gita. Manakkal Nambi was happy to see his plan working and the inner transformation that was happening in Yamunacharya. He started to chant one chapter a day and explain its meaning to Yamunacharya who started to lament for having wasted his valuable human life in material pursuits due to his ignorance. At times, Yamunacharya used to curse himself for being attached to material pleasures, wife, kingdom, children, etc, and regret having wasted thirty-five years of his life without meeting an enlightened person like Manakkal Nambi. They both, thus, reached the outskirts of Sri Rangam on the eighteenth evening and Manakkal Nambi had by then revealed the first seventeen chapters of the Bhagavad-gita.

On the eighteenth evening, Manakkal Nambi started chanting the verses from the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita and explaining their purports to Yamunacharya. Even before Manakkal Nambi could explain Charma Shloka (66th verse of the eighteenth chapter of Bhagavad-gita), Yamunacharya had lost all his

material desires and was renounced. Manakkal Nambi started to explain the Charma Shloka, which reads, “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” Yamunacharya started to cry and requested Manakkal Nambi to accept him as a disciple and also expressed his determination to renounce everything to pursue his spiritual life.

Such was the impact of the Bhagavad-gita on Yamunacharya. Just by listening to the chanting of Bhagavad-gita and discourses on it from an exalted devotee only once, Yamunacharya lost his hankering for material pleasure. He was willing to renounce everything including his kingdom, wife, and four children, and accept the renounced order of life to serve the Lord. Manakkal Nambi was very pleased to see Yamunacharya’s state and told him that they had come close to the island where the family treasure bequeathed to Yamunacharya by Natha Muni was hidden.

Manakkal Nambi also told Yamunacharya that he would show him the treasure the following day. Yamunacharya who was renounced by then told him that he did not need the treasure as he wanted to renounce everything and surrender to the Lord. However, Manakkal Nambi requested Yamunacharya to relieve him of the responsibility entrusted by Natha Muni by accepting the treasure and retiring for the day. Yamunacharya could not sleep the entire night as he was contemplating the message of the Gita, particularly on the meaning of the Charma Shloka, and spent the entire night crying.

Manakkal Nambi took Yamunacharya to the banks of Cauvery very early in the morning and both of them finished their ablutions. Manakkal Nambi showed the island formed by the waters of Cauvery in the south and its tributary Kollidam in the north and said, “That is the island in which the family treasure bequeathed by your grandfather is hidden. It lies within the seven walls of that temple of the Lord.” Both Yamunacharya and Manakkal Nambi crossed the river and reached the island and started to walk toward the temple.

As they approached the temple, Yamunacharya, having lost his desire for material pleasure and wealth, started to falter. Manakkal Nambi walked ahead and Yamunacharya followed him with folded hands. They started crossing one door after another and Yamunacharya’s mindset was surcharged with the spiritual vibrations that were emanating from within the temple and the intensity of his newly awakened spiritual consciousness started to increase manifold. Yamunacharya had not experienced anything like this before and he started to forget himself as they approached the sanctum after crossing the six gates that adorned the six ramparts of the temple. Manakkal Nambi reached the door of the sanctum sanctorum and started to pray by chanting some mantras and hymns of the Azhwars.

Yamunacharya, who was soaking in the grandeur of the temple and the spiritual atmosphere standing behind Manakkal Nambi, became anxious. Manakkal Nambi opened the door of the sanctum sanctorum and said, “Look there lies your family treasure on the coils of the great serpent, which is supposed to be holding the entire creation on its hoods. This family treasure of yours is the cause of all causes and the source of everything. This is the beginning and end of everything. Everything in this universe including the demigods and planets rests in its belly and this is the most cherished treasure that is bequeathed by your

grandfather, Natha Muni, to you. Please accept it and take care of it and relieve me of the burden."

Yamunacharya saw the Deity of Lord Ranganatha and was captivated by its beauty, which is glowing with radiance. He ran into the sanctum sanctorum and hugged the Deity and started crying out of ecstasy. He repeatedly swooned and rolled on the floor unable to control his happiness. Tears started dripping from his eyes, he became oblivious to the world around him, his hair stood erect and he started to sing and dance unable to control his ecstasy. Manakkal Nambi became very happy to see the devotional fervor of Yamunacharya and considered himself to be very fortunate to witness such an unhindered spontaneous display of intense devotion to the Supreme Lord, which is desired even by the great yogis who have practiced austerities for thousands of years. Yamunacharya fell to the ground and went into a trance. He remained in that state for a very long time and Manakkal Nambi did not want to disturb him.

Though Yamunacharya regained consciousness after some time, words failed him, his throat was parched, he could not control his emotions and he continued to devotedly gaze on the beautiful form of the Lord. Unable to contain his devotion or to find an appropriate means to express his devotion to the Lord he circumambulated the Deity, again and again, hugged the Deity, and frequently cried in ecstasy. Yamunacharya spent hours in the sanctum sanctorum and when it was time to come out of it he told Manakkal Nambi that he would not go back to Madhura (the present Madurai), which was his capital and expressed his desire to stay back in Sri Rangam.

Yamunacharya fell at Manakkal Nambi's feet and requested him to accept him as a disciple. Manakkal Nambi, who had witnessed intense devotion and dispassion in Yamunacharya, initiated him without delay. Yamunacharya also took sannyasa, the renounced order of life, by the mercy of Manakkal Nambi. Manakkal Nambi revealed Thirumantra, the eight-syllabled Ashtakshari Mantra that was revealed by Lord Narayana to Nara during their incarnation at Badrinath; Dvaya Mantra that was revealed by the Supreme Lord to Lakshmi and the Charma Shloka to Yamunacharya. Yamunacharya began to stay at Sri Rangam and serve the Lord, and Manakkal Nambi started to teach various sacred scriptures including the Divya Prabandhams and the works of Natha Muni to him.

Actually, in this case, initially, Yamunacharya agreed to travel with Manakkal Nambi to get the treasure, which Yamunacharya understood to be material wealth. Especially, he was tricked by the words of Manakkal Nambi, who stated that there is a fort with seven compound walls in between the two Kaveri rivers, etc… later he obtained that spiritual treasure, lying in-between Kaveri rivers and seven walled compounds, Lord Ranganatha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Tejasam nidhi – One who is the treasure of radiance or prowess," Manakkal Nambi brought Yamunacharya to hand over the treasure, which is Lord Ranganatha when Yamunacharya saw the deity, he was mesmerized by the influence of Lord Ranganatha's great radiance, beauty, prowess, etc… and surrendered at his lotus feet by leaving aside kingdom, family, relatives, wealth, etc…

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Holy Name 35: Sarva Sharmapradha

Mantra: Om Sarva Sharma pradhaya namah

Meaning – One who grants happiness to all

Pastime – Once a poor Vaishnava used to be the first one in the line and was notorious for demanding prasadam not only for himself but for his entire family consisting of sixteen children! Many times devotees serving in the temple had to miss their share of prasadam because of this. When temple authorities wanted to send him away, he would plead on behalf of his 16 children. One day they brought this to the notice of Sri Ramanuja and said that they would not mind giving him extra prasadam if only he was willing to do some service to the temple. Turning to the Vaishnava, Sri Ramanuja asked him what was preventing him from rendering some service to the temple. He replied, Swamy! Look at my children! They are undernourished and sick most of the time. All my time is spent taking care of them. Moreover, unfortunately, I have not studied the Vedas or the Divya Prabandhams (hymns by the Azhwars) and so cannot join in the temple Parayanam (Congregational reciting). What I know is a part of Vishnu-Sahasranamam only! What can I do?" Sri Ramanuja then asked him to recite the Vishnu Sahasranamam to the extent that he knew it. The Vaishnavite hesitated and then began the recitation. "visvam viṣṇur vasatkaro bhuua bhavya bhavat-prabhuḥ; bhutakṛt bhutabhṛt..." Sri Ramanuja looked at him reflectively and said, "You recited the sixth name, Bhutabhrt. Now onwards you must go on doing the Japa of the sixth name, in this manner: Bhutabhrte Namah. If you do this, you don't have to seek food; food will come to you, to your place! Will you do it?" The Vaishnava eagerly nodded.

From that day that Vaishnava did not come to the temple. But the devotees noticed that a substantial quantity of Prasadam was strangely getting missed daily. The authorities suspected that this should be due to that Vaishnava who is managing to steal the prasadam. Sri Ramanuja asked them whether they knew where he stayed. They said, "That is again strange! He has moved out of his house." Sri Ramanuja asked them to search for the Vaishnava and bring him, as he would like to see him. All their efforts were in vain to locate that person. A few weeks later, Sri Ramanuja had to cross the Kollidam river that surrounds Srirangam, for an event in a nearby village. That Vaishnava came running to thank Sri Ramanuja. He offered pranams and started weeping profusely. When he managed to talk, he said, "Swamy! By your Grace, that boy is delivering the prasadam, both times every day! All my children are no more sick or undernourished. I have moved out of the place near the temple so as not to get into a problem with the temple authorities. I am eternally grateful to you. I am also doing the Japa, 'bhutabhṛte namah', constantly." Sri Ramanuja was overwhelmed. "Which boy? What did he say his name was?" asked Sri Ramanuja. The Vaishnava replied that the boy introduced himself as the Servant of Sri Ramanuja!

Sri Ramanuja realized now what was going on. Sri Ranganatha Himself was delivering the food to the Vaishnava, every day, both in the morning and at the night!

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Sarva Sharmapradha – One who grants happiness to all,” in this case, by arranging Prasadam personally and delivering them to the devotee as per the words of Ramanujacharya, ord provided happiness to everyone. Even the devotees, who

complained to Ramanujacharya were also satisfied by the special gesture of the Supreme Lord.

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Holy Name 36: Aheesa

Mantra: Om Aheesaya namah

Meaning – One who is the Lord of the immeasurable dimension, the spiritual world

Pastime – In Sri Rangam, once a Vaishnavi (A women devotee of Lord Vishnu or Ranganatha) living the next door to Swami Nampillai, who was then in charge of the entire Sri Vaishnava clan and great Acharya and devotee of Lord Ranaganatha, was approached by the disciples of Swami Nampillai to request that since her house is right next to Swami Nampillai's house if she gives her house to Swami Nampillai that will allow them to extend Swami Nampillai's house, which will benefit a bigger assembly of Vaishnavas. The lady first hesitates but then goes to Swami Nampillai and requests, If he (Swami Nampillai) gives a place for her in Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu, for her offering. She will give her this place. Swami Nampillai states that the Supreme Lord Ranganatha is the owner and master of the immeasurable spiritual world and only he can give her the place in Vaikunta." The intelligent Vaishnavi remembers a similar instance of a lady with Sri Ramanuja in Thirumala, immediately she requests Swami Nampillai to give her the letter by recommending her to Lord Sri Sri Ranganatha for granting a place in Vaikunta, the spiritual world. Swami Nampillai is thrilled by her request, intelligence, and determination to attain the supreme lord, so he happily writes a note for her by recommmeding her to Lord Ranganatha to grant the place in Vaikunta, the spiritual world, and according to her words, she moves out of her house by giving to Swami Nampillai for peaching activities and with that letter of recommendation, she went to Lord Ranganatha and submits the same. Lord Ranganatha assured her of a place in his abode, Vaikunta after she leaves her mortal coil. After this incident within a few days, she leaves her mortal coil and reaches Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu).

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranagnatha is "Aheesa – One who is the Lord of the immeasurable dimension, the spiritual world."

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Holy Name 37: Sama gana priyothsasava

Mantra: Om Sama gana priyothsasavaya namah

Meaning – One who likes the celebrations with the singing of Sama Veda

Pastime – Angiras, one of the saptha rishis, performed severe austerities in the middle of five fires at Haridwar and propitiated the Lord. Being pleased with his devotion, the Lord granted his prayer to make him immune to the effects of Shata Vayu, a type of air that is believed to take away God-consciousness from human beings as soon as they are born and thereby, bind them in the dualities of this material world. As Angiras had overcome the effects of Shata Vayu by the mercy of the Lord, his descendants, and followers were called Shatamarshanas, which eventually became the name of their gotra.

Many great saints like Purukustar and Trasa Dasyu were born in the lineage of Angiras. Due to various reasons, some of the Shatamarshanas migrated to south India, and some settled in and around Vira Narayanapuram, which is also called Kattu Mannar Koil. In due course of time, the Shatamarshana lineage came to be called Sreshtas (Sottai-Kulathar in Tamil), due to the greatness of their origin. Ranganatha, who later on became popular as Natha Muni, was born in Sottai Kulam at Vira Narayanapuram.

Once Natha Muni went on a pilgrimage to Kumbakonam and visited Lord Aravamudan's temple. Some devotees were singing Nammazhwar's hymns before the Lord and in the end, they sang the Phala-Shruti, which reads, "We dedicate these ten hymns from the thousand sung by Kurugur Sadagopan to thee." Natha Muni was captivated by the philosophy and the diction enshrined in those hymns. He requested the devotees to teach him all the thousand hymns composed by Nammazhwar and the devotees expressed their ignorance about the remaining 990 hymns. Seeing Natha Muni's determination to learn the hymns, they asked him to inquire at Kurugur, the birthplace of Nammazhwar. To his dismay, the people of Kurugur had completely forgotten about Nammazhwar as he had left the planet thousands of years before Natha Muni.

Natha Muni's quest for Nammazhwar's works led him to a very old man called Parankusha Dasa. He too expressed his ignorance about Nammazhwar's works but taught him Kannin-siruthambu, the eleven hymns composed by Madhurakavi Azhwar in praise of his spiritual master, Nammazhwar. Parankusha Dasa told Natha Muni that his forefathers used to tell him that Nammazhwar would personally teach all the hymns composed by him to the person who chants Kannin-siruthambu 12,000 times with devotion before Nammazhwar's Deity at Kurugur. Parankusha Dasa also told Natha Muni that people used to go into a trance just by devotedly singing Kannin-siruthambu and getting Nammazhwar's mercy. Natha Muni was so madly in love with Nammazhwar's hymns that he resolved to chant Kannin-siruthambu till Nammazhwar showered his mercy on him by teaching the 1,000 hymns.

Nammazhwar spoke to Natha Muni in his Deity form and taught Natha Muni all the works composed by him. Nammazhwar was so impressed with Natha Muni that he requested all the other Azhwars to teach their works to Natha Muni and the other Azhwars complied. Thus, Natha Muni revived all the works of the Azhwars with the help of Nammazhwar. Natha Muni returned to Vira Narayanapuram and started to classify and codify the works of the Azhwars before teaching them to interested devotees.

Nathamuni learned all the 4000 Divya Prabandhams from Nammalwar himself at Azhwar Thirunagai and returned to his place Kattu Mannar Kovil. He recited the entire Divya Prabandhams in front of the deity in the temple of Kattu Mannar Kovil, Lord Mannanar (Narayana), and received all honors from Lord Narayana. Further, he taught them to his disciples.

The Chola King, who was ruling the country with Gangai Konda Cholapuram as his capital, was a great patron of different art forms. Therefore, many debates, seminars, and competitions were frequently conducted in his court. During one such competition, two courtesans, who were experts in their art forms, competed against each other to prove their supremacy in singing and dancing. One of the

courtesans was proficient in manushya-ghana, the music of humans, and the other was proficient in deva-ghana, the celestial music.

Though deva-ghana was considered to be more difficult to sing, and the courtesan who was singing deva-ghana was better than the other courtesan, the king, and his courtiers declared the courtesan who was singing manushya-ghana as the winner of the contest due to their ignorance of deva-ghana. The courtesan who was singing deva-ghana felt humiliated and wanted to convince the king about the supremacy of her art form. She started to sing in front of temples in her efforts to find someone who was knowledgeable in deva-ghana and who could explain the intricacies of her art form to the king. The courtesan, eventually, reached Vira Narayanapuram and started to sing before the Lord.

Natha Muni, who was present in the temple, was very impressed with the courtesan's singing and congratulated her. After speaking to Natha Muni, the courtesan realized that she had found a person who could enlighten the king about her art form. She immediately went to Gangai Konda Cholapuram to inform the king.

As soon as the king got to know about Natha Muni, he went to Vira Narayanapuram after making some initial inquires about the sage. Natha Muni set music to the courtesan's songs with the help of cymbals of different sizes and weights and the courtesan's singing started sounding very melodious all of a sudden. After learning about the intricacies of deva-ghana, the king reversed his decision. Being impressed by Natha Muni's knowledge and devotion, the king became Natha Muni's disciple. The king appointed Natha Muni as the administrator of the Sri Ranganatha temple at Sri Rangam. Natha Muni started to spend his days happily in the service of the Lord.

In Sri Rangam, Natha Muni set the Divya Prabandham to music and started teaching it to aspiring disciples. His nephews, Melaghath-Alwan and Keelaghath-Alwan, mastered the Divya Prabandham very soon and started to recite them with devotion.

Therefore, Natha Muni made them chant the Divya Prabandham before the Lord during important festivals. The Lord was very pleased with the devoted singing of Melaghath-Alwan and Keelaghath-Alwan and he directed his priests to confer the titles Manavala Perumal Ariyar and Nada Vinoda Ariyar respectively on them, and their singing service came to be known as Ariyar Sevai. Ariyar Sevai became a regular feature during the festivals at Ranganatha's temple since then and it started to spread to other important Vaishnava temples. The descendants of Natha Muni's nephews continue to perform Ariyar Sevai before Lord Ranganatha even today. Thus, Natha Muni was instrumental in introducing the chanting of Divya Prabandham during the festivals and regular worship of the Lord in Vaishnava temples.

Nathamuni being the eternal associate of Lord Narayana (Ranganatha) in the spiritual world, very well knows that Supreme Lord is very fond of Sama Veda (the glorification of the Lord with songs and verses), so he learned everything under Nammazhwar and by the divine influence, he became the head of Sri Rangam temple and he established the celebration of all the festivities of Lord Ranganatha along with the chanting of Divya Prabandham, Deva-ghana, etc…, this kind of festivities are very dear to Supreme Lord Ranganatha, that's why he

is known as “Sama gana priyothsasava – One who likes the celebrations with the singing of Sama Veda.”

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Holy Name 38: Amruthathvapradha

Mantra: Om Amruthathvapradhaya namah

Meaning – One who grants immortality (freedom from repeated birth and death)

Pastime – Azhwars are considered the 12 devotees of Lord Narayana, who were instrumental in popularising Vaishnavism in the Tamil-speaking regions. The Azhwars were influential in promoting the Bhagavata cult and the two Hindu epics, namely, Ramayana and Mahabaratha. The religious works of Azhwars in Tamil, songs of love and devotion, are compiled as Nalayira Divya Prabandham containing 4000 verses and the 108 temples revered in their songs are classified as Divya desams.

The verses of the various azhwars were compiled by Nathamuni, a 10th-century Vaishnavite theologian, who called it the "Dravida Veda or Tamil Veda". The songs or Divya Prabandam are regularly sung in all the Vishnu temples around the world. Nammazhwar is the Azhwar that appeared to Nathamuni and gave the complete 4000 songs or Pashurams of all the Azhwar.

When Nammazhwar was born, as a child he was extraordinary, for several days he lived with eyes closed without speaking, in perfect health, and without food (neither breastfed milk). Distressed at this, the parents placed the child at the shrine of Lord Adinatha Perumal, the deity of Thirukurugur temple, surrendering unto Him the entire burden of upbringing the child.

When the parents left the child in the temple, the child slowly crawled into a hole in a tamarind tree, sat in padmasana, and began to meditate, he was in this state for as long as sixteen years and he is the sixth among all Azhwars. When a Tamil poet, scholar, and Azhwar who had gone on a pilgrimage to North India, Madhurakavi Azhwar saw a bright light shining to the south, and followed it until he reached the tree where the boy was sitting.

With great difficulty, Madhurakavi succeeded in drawing out Nammazhwar from his deep meditation. He learned from Nammazhwar the secrets of all the shastras by becoming his disciple. The works of Nammazhwar contributed to the philosophical and theological ideas of Vaishnavism.

Though Nammazhwar did not visit any of the 108 divyadesam temples of Vaishnavites, it appears from his works he must have had the vision of all the deities in the temples which he had glorified in his hymns.

Each Azhwar had different origins and belonged to different castes, because they showed an example, for Bhakti towards Lord Narayana, birth is not an obstacle. So, Nammazhwar took his birth into the great Sudhra (Vellalar Tribe) Family, but miraculously he landed in the temple of Lord Narayana, by this Lord Narayana and his devotee like Nammazhwar shows us an example that birth is not the criterion for devotion to Lord Narayana.

Nammazhwar, the greatest among the Azhwars, was primarily responsible for Naalaayira Divya Prabhandham, it was from Nammazhwar that Natha Muni picked up the entire content of the Prabhandham Natha Muni was directed by Aaraavamuthan (Lord Sarangapani) of Thiru Kudanthai and hence he is also referred to as 'Vedham Tamil Seitha Maaran'. When one says just Azhwar, it means the reference is to Nammazhwar, such as the reverence for him.

Nammazhwar didn't want to live in this material world any more. He asked for Moksha (liberation) on the very first day. Nammazhwar's desire to attain liberation is said to have been as big as the sky. Lord, however, wanted to make a positive change to the world through his Paasurams (compositions) and wanted everyone to absorb the beautiful Paasurams of Nammazhwar. As the Lord decided that the world should benefit from Nammazhwar's Paasurams, he delayed the liberation of Nammazhwar till the very last day. Finally, after listening to the beautiful Paasurams of Thiruvaaimozhi, Lord gives in. The Lord was so taken in by the Paasurams that it is said Lord wanted to take Nammazhwar to Vaikuntam in the same form. "It was this body that rendered the beautiful Prabhandham to the world and hence I want to take you with me with your body itself" was Lord's view.

Even though Nammazhwar was physically present during his time in Azhwar Thirunagari region of Thirunelveli, which is far from Sri Rangam, the abode of Lord Ranganatha, still, he offers his surrender onto the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha and requests for liberation from this material world. But, finally, Lord Ranganatha sanctions the desire of Nammazhwar. According to popular belief, Nammazhwar stayed on this planet till he turned 32 and the Lord Himself came to Vaikuntha's door to take him in. To commemorate this, Vaikuntha Ekadashi is celebrated in all Vishnu temples. 1,296 hymns were compiled by Nammazhwar during his lifetime. A crown with the lotus feet of the Lord on top of it is kept in the Sri Vaishnava temple, signifying Nammazhwar's intense desire to dwell under the lotus feet of the Lord. The crown represents Nammalwar's head. This crown is named Shatari and is symbolically placed on the heads of the believers who visit the temple to show the Lordship of the Supreme Lord as well as to signify our eternal servitude to His lotus feet.

To commemorate this incident, on the Vaikunta Ekadasi day, Lord Namperumal (Lord Ranganatha) of Sri Rangam with His paraphernalia arrives at the door of Vaikunta to grace His devotee Nammazhwar, who immediately seeks salvation. However, Lord Namperumal delays this request as He wants to listen to Tiruvaimozhi rendered by Nammazhwar. There are over 1000 verses in Tiruvaimozhi and these are recited in the form of song and dance by a group called Arayar in Sri Rangam, who enact and praise the azhwars and recite 100 verses per day, popularly known as Arayar Sevai. This ten-day festival starting from Vaikunta Ekadasi is known as Ira Pathu. On the tenth day, after the Tiruvaimozhi recitation is over, Lord Namperumal finally yields to the pleading Nammazhwar who had been seeking liberation from the first day of Vaikunta Ekadasi, after Nammazhwar falls at His lotus feet (Tiruvadi Thozal). In order to bring out the greatness of Nammazhwar and his compositions, Lord Namperumal took him to Vaikunta in his divine body, and become free from the suffering of material existences (birth, death, old age, and disease). The crowd bereft of Nammazhwar becomes restless and requests Lord Namperumal to return Nammazhwar to humanity as his service is still required for their upliftment. Lord Namperumal, who is the master of the material and spiritual world, consents by saying, "Thandhom", meaning granted. Hence Nammazhwar returns to his place

and continues his service to humanity. This event is celebrated as a grand festival for twenty days, starting from Pagal Pathu and ending with Nammazhwar Moksha, the liberation of Nammazhwar, in Sri Rangam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Amruthathvapradha – One who grants immortality (freedom from repeated birth and death)," not only for Nammazhwar, everyone he is the grantor of immortality.

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Holy Name 39: Nithya

Mantra: Om Nithyaya namah

Meaning – One who is eternal

Pastime – Nampillai was born in the city of Nambur. His original name was Varadaraja. He was empowered by Thirumangai Azhwar, known as Thirukkalikanri Dasa. He then moved to Sri Rangam and was one of the many disciples of Swami Nanjeeyar, who was the direct disciple of Sri Parasara Bhattar and to whom Sri Parasara Bhattar had handed over the responsibility of the Vaishnava clan before ascending to the abode of Lord Vishnu. Later, Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar, who is descended from Kurathazhwan and Sri Parasara Bhattar, surrenders at the lotus feet of Swami Nampillai and serves him.

When Swami Nampillai, the spiritual master of Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar, ascends to Sri Vaikunta, Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar shaves his head as disciples are supposed to do. A brother of Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar becomes upset at his act and complains to him saying why should someone born in the family of Kurathazhwan, shave the head for Swami Nampillai's ascending to Sri Vaikunta. For that Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar replies to his brother sarcastically "Oh! I have insulted the lineage of Kurathazhwan. How are you going to rectify this?" Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar's brother, unable to take those sarcastic words, goes to Lord Ranganatha and complains to him about Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar's act. Lord Ranganatha summons Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar and asks him through the head priest "When I am alive why did you do this? I always exist and what is the need of your act?" because Lord Ranganatha considers himself the father to Parasara Bhattar and his descendants. Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar responds "Please forgive me for my actions. I should have shown complete surrender to Swami Nampillai which is the natural quality (Complete surrender to Vaishnava) of anyone coming in the lineage of Kurathazhwan and shaved my facial and bodily hair. Instead, I only shaved my head which shows that I am just doing minimal respects as a disciple. Are you upset with me for just doing the minimum respect?". Hearing the words of Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar, Lord Ranganatha becomes very pleased with the dedication of Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar towards his Spiritual Master Swami Nampillai and honors Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar with Prasadam, garlands, etc... Such were the glories of Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar.

From this incident, especially from the words of Lord Ranganatha, we can understand that Supreme Lord Ranganatha is "Nithya – One who is eternal," in this case, Supreme Lord Ranganatha, who considered himself as the father of descendants of Sri Parasara Bhattar asked Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar for the clarification as his acts of shaving off his head, even though his father, Lord

Sri Ranganatha, always exists. But, Lord Ranganatha was very much pleased by the dedication of Naduvil Thiruvidhi Pillai Bhattar to the lotus feet of his spiritual master, Swami Nampillai.

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Holy Name 40: Sarva Prabhu

Mantra: Om Sarva Prabhave namah

Meaning – One who is the Lord of everything (the living entities, both material and spiritual world)

Pastime – By the divine arrangements of Lord Ranganatha, who made several sequences of incidents in the life of Sri Ramanuja, which made Sri Ramanuja accept the renounced order of life. Also, Sri Yamuncharya's prayers to Sri Ranganatha were fructified. After accepting Sannyasa, Sri Ramanuja stayed at Kanchipuram. During then, Lord Ranganatha sends his confidential servant and mesmerizes Lord Varadaraja, and gets Sri Ramanuja to Sri Rangam, the divine abode of Lord Ranganatha.

Finally, as desired by Lord Ranganatha, Sri Yamunacharya, several other Acharyas, etc… Sri Ramanuja arrived at Sri Rangam. Lord Ranganatha already knows about the transformation and progress that will be done by Sri Ramanuja in the future and also Lord Ranganatha knows Sri Ramanuja as his own servant Adisesha, who appeared for the upliftment of the Sri Vaishnava clan and propagation of the Bhakti cult. Keeping all these in mind, when Swami Ramanuja arrived at Sri Rangam, the Lord Ranganatha himself came to receive him. During then, Lord gave him the title Udaiyavar, which means possessor. The Lord made Swami Ramanuja be in charge of Ubhaya [both] Vibhuti [property]. The Lord was the Proprietor of Leela Vibhuti [playful property or material world] and Nitya Vibhuti [everlasting property or spiritual world]. Leela Vibhuti consists of millions of spheres of Universes. One Universe consists of Seven Upper worlds, including Earth, and Lower Seven worlds. Nitya Vibhuti is Vaikuntam, where only Muktatma (liberated souls) and Nityaatma (eternally liberated souls) live. Leela Vibhuti is One-Fourth of His property and the remaining Three-Fourths is Nitya Vibhuti. Leela Vibhuti is created and destroyed. Nitya Vibhuti is eternal and it will never be destroyed, all the living entities in Leela Vibhuti one day would reach Nitya Vibhuti, the eternal spiritual world. So, Lord Ranganatha asked Swami Ramanuja to look after His properties! Thus he got the name Udaiyavar. With this charge, responsibility and accountability increased for Swami Ramanuja. Thus Swami Ramanuja had to be responsible for correcting all living beings in this material world and ensuring they all reached Nitya Vibhuti! He had to spread Bhakti, among all people and make them observe Saranagati and reach Vaikunta, the eternal spiritual world. After handing over the responsibility of both worlds to Sri Ramanuja, Lord Ranganatha states, "Now onwards, whoever you (Sri Ramanuja) recommends or whoever gets the grace or touch of Sri Ramanuja, they will get the Spiritual world."

One more sense is, Sri Ramanuja is an incarnation of Adisesha or Balarama, who are known as Guru-tattva, Supreme Lord in general entrusts the responsibility of giving liberation to the bona fide Gurus, who come in the bona fide Sampradaya. In that way, Sri Ramanuja accepted the great responsibility and propagated the Bhakti cult far and wide and organized a great movement of Bhakti tradition, which continued for several centuries.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Sarva Prabhu – One who is the Lord of everything (the living entities, both material and spiritual world),” in this case, Lord Ranganatha is the Lord of everything in both, the material world (Leela Vibhuti) and spiritual world (Nitya Vibhuti), which he handed over to his dear servant, Sri Ramanuja.

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Holy Name 41: Arindhama

Mantra: Om Arindhamaya namah

Meaning – One who is the conqueror of enemies

Pastime – Some of the priests, who were controlling Lord Ranganatha’s temple, could not digest Ramanuja’s popularity. As most of the people, including those who used to come to Lord Ranganatha’s temple, were going to Ramanuja’s monastery and were gradually becoming his ardent disciples, the priests feared that their income would be affected and they might very soon become insignificant in the town. One of the chief priests of Lord Ranganatha’s temple conspired with others and decided to eliminate Ramanuja by poisoning him. The chief priest convinced Ramanuja to come to his house for alms one day. The priest went to his house with some deadly poison and gave it to his wife and said, “Listen, Ramanuja is coming to our house for alms today. Prepare some good food and poison the food that would be offered to him as alms. If he continues to live, we will have to beg for a living. With his sweet and crafty words, he tricked the people of Sri Rangam into believing him to be an incarnation of Lakshmana. Very soon we might lose our importance in this town if we allow him to continue like this.”

Following her husband’s instructions, the chief priest’s wife prepared different varieties of food and mixed some poison in them. Ramanuja came to the priest’s house for alms. The priest’s wife washed his feet and made him sit. Being an obedient wife, the priest’s wife had decided to offer the poisoned food to Ramanuja, but after seeing his captivating appearance and radiating childlike countenance the lady was moved. Despite her best efforts, she could not offer the poisoned food and tears started rolling down her cheeks as she was overwhelmed with affection toward Ramanuja. Especially influenced by Lord Ranganatha, the priest’s wife said, “Son, take your alms elsewhere today. This food is poisoned.”

Saying so, the priest’s wife threw away the food. Ramanuja was stunned as he did not understand why people were trying to poison him when he did not harbor ill will against anyone and was working for the welfare of society. With a heavy heart, Ramanuja silently walked out of the priest’s house.

With a feeling of dejection, after coming to know about the chief priest’s intention to poison him to death, Ramanuja lost his appetite. Instead of going to other households for his alms, Ramanuja walked towards river Cauvery in the hot sun and started to ponder over the reasons that might have prompted the priest to kill him. Ramanuja’s guru, Ghostipurna, on coming to know of the attempt on Ramanuja’s life, hastened to the banks of the Cauvery to see him. Ramanuja saw Ghostipurna coming towards him and prostrated before Ghostipurna to offer his obeisance to his guru. Though the dunes were very hot due to the summer heat,

Ramanuja did not raise himself from the ground until Ghostipurna lifted him and hugged him. Being aggrieved at the chief priest's envy towards his disciple, Ghostipurna wants the safety of his disciple and waited for the response of Ramanuja's disciples on the act of not lifting Ramanuja from the hot sand Cauvery bed, seeing the incident Kidambi Achan, the disciple of Sri Ramanuja, immediately lifted Sri Ramanuja from the hot sand and started to an inquiry from the Ghostipurna for his act and Ghostipurna, who is very pleased by the behavior of Kidambi Achan and his concern for Sri Ramanuja, Ghostipurna asked Ramanuja to stop begging from that day and he instructed Kidambi Achan, the disciple of Ramanuja to cook for his guru.

Ramanuja returned to his monastery and continued to live like before and chose not to reveal the chief priest's evil designs to poison him to anyone. However, the chief priest, frustrated at his wife's disobedience, continued to make plans to kill Ramanuja. One day, the chief priest mixed some deadly poison in the thirtham, which is served to the devotees in the temple, and gave it to Ramanuja. Though Ramanuja suspected that the thirtham was poisoned due to its smell and taste, he drank it with devotion. Ramanuja maintained his equipoise and prayed for the welfare of the priest and others who were supporting him. Ramanuja silently walked out of the temple. The chief priest became delighted as he thought that the poisoned thirtham would certainly kill Ramanuja and went home thinking that he would see Ramanuja's dead body the following day. But, Lord Ranganatha make sure that the poison did not have any effect on his devotee, Sri Ramanuja. Still, Lord Ranganatha not personally punished the priest for his heinous act, because he wish to show the glory of his devotee, Sri Ramanuja, and also wish to transform the heart of the envious and fallen people.

The next morning the priest came out of his house expecting to hear the news of Ramanuja's death. However, he was stunned to see Ramanuja coming in a procession along with many of his disciples, who were singing the pasurams compiled by the alwars. Ramanuja was engrossed in contemplating the meanings of the pasurams, which were being sung by the accompanying devotees. The captivating mien and childlike countenance of Ramanuja brought about a strange sort of transformation in the priest and he could not digest the guilt of having tried to kill Ramanuja twice. The priest ran towards Ramanuja and fell at his feet with tears in his eyes. The priest said, "Sir, please forgive this sinful soul. Without realizing your greatness, I tried to kill you by poisoning. I do not deserve your forgiveness. Please throw me to hell. Despite being a priest, I tried to kill a noble soul like you. There cannot be a soul who is as sinful as me."

The priest started to bang his head on the ground in despair and blood started to ooze from his head. As Ramanuja had focused his mind on the glories of the Lord and was in a state of a trance he did not notice the priest. The devotees stopped singing as soon as they saw blood on the priest's head and Ramanuja came back to his consciousness and was shocked to see the priest holding his feet. Ramanuja understood everything and lifted the priest and said, "Sir, we are all human beings and are likely to commit mistakes. We have to frequently retrospect to correct ourselves. One can overcome the sinful reactions through repentance and unconditional surrender to Lord Ranganatha."

The priest thanked Ramanuja for forgiving him and requested Ramanuja to accept him and his wife as a disciple. Thus, the chief priest of Lord Ranganatha's temple and his wife, of them became a disciple of Ramanuja. The chief priest and

his wife, both eventually became good-hearted devotees and attained liberation after their death.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Arindhama – One who is the conqueror of enemies,” in this case, the enemies of his dear devotee, Sri Ramanuja, are his own servants, the priest of the temple, to conquer them, Lord Ranganatha didn’t use any weapons like any other incarnation in the Kali-yuga everyone is fallen and if we want to kill, then Lord should kill almost all, so to conquer over them, he used his mercy and transformed their hearts and this way, he conquered enemies (enemy of his devotee, Sri Ramanuja).

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Holy Name 42: Bhadra Kunkumaliptha

Mantra: Om Bhadra kunkuma lipthaya namah

Meaning – One who has auspicious Kunkuma (vermilion) adhering to him

Pastime – Due to the devotional contribution and maintenance of the temple by King Sundara Pandiyan, the glory of his services and temple opulence reached the Northern part of the country, the Delhi sultans. The Sultans started to invade the temple in 1323 A.D. of Sri Rangam 12000 Vaishnavas sacrificed their life to safeguard Sri Rangam. Periya Perumal (Main deity) was hidden by constructing a stone wall before him. At that time “Swamy Pillailogachariyar” took away Azhagiyamanavalan, Sridevi, and Bhudevi and traveled towards the southern direction to safeguard the Lord deity but he attained Paramapadham (Demise) in Jothishkudi near Madurai. Same time Vedanta Desikan took away the granthas (Sruthaprakashika – commentary of Sribhasyam) and traveled towards the northern direction to Satyagalam near Mysore.

Azhagiyamanavalan traveled further south of Madurai, then to Kerala, Thirukanambi near Mysore, and Chandragiri forest before finally reaching Thirumala. From Thirumala to Gingi (near Tiruvannamalai) and back to the home of Sri Rangam. Perumal started from Sri Rangam in the year of 1323 A.D during the 8th day of Panguni utsavam and returned after 48 years on 1371 A.D on the 17th day of Tamil month Vaikasi.

There have been some contradictions stating it was not 1371 but rather 1369 A.D. Temple Inscription present in the 2nd prakaram (Raja Mahendran Thiruchhuttru) eastern side states the year clearly as 1371 A.D.

Gopana brought the deities of the Lord and his consorts from Singapuram (Gingee) and reinstalled them in Sri Rangam on the 17th of Vaikasi in the year Paridapi, Saka.1293.

Most of the Sri Rangam residents were massacred in 1323 and the remaining very few went out for safety Sri Rangam was deserted for a few years after the Islamic invasion. When Azhagiyamanvalan (Utsava Deity) returned after 48 years Sri Rangam residents were not aware that he was the old utsava deity who was taken away from the temple. As the new residents were not aware of what happened to the old Utsava Deity they installed a new Utsavar after some years when the temple was revived. As the Sri Rangam residents were not aware of

the Azhagiyamavalan and the new utsavar was installed they were not clear on who was the old Utsava Deity.

On the onside crowd of Sri Rangam residents with new Utsava Deity were saying he is Azhagiyamanavalan and on another side old aged kodavar (the servant who safeguarded) alone standing with actual Azhagiyamanavalan. They were not able to differentiate easily as both the utsavars looked similar.

Azhagiyamanavalan and Thiruvarangamaligayar (New deity) will be at the same height, the chakram will be in the same pose as the pryoga chakram, couch too will be in the same posture, the right-hand mudra, and fingers posture will match exactly. Left hand Ghadaha, Lotus feet posture, and base support for fixing Perumal for procession all will match exactly. Thirumukam (Divine face) and crown too will be very similar. Azhagiyamanavalan has got Kavacham covered over him fully from neck to thiruvadi (foot) so he looks more glorified in recent days.

The local administrator wanted to find out whether there is anyone available who would have had darshan of old Azhagiyamanavalan before 1323 A.D. They looked for such a person in Sri Rangam and nearby luckily found a 93-year-old Dhobi Rajakanda Gopalan, who said I have had darshan of original Azhagiyamanavala. He mentioned his eyesight is not proper now so he will not be able to see and tell out of the two utsava deities who were the old Deity.

Luckily Rajakanda Gopalan mentioned that he has washed Azhagiyamanavalan’s vasathram (dress) many times and theertham (Holy water) from Azhagiyamanavalan’s wet vasathram will have a unique taste that he still remembers.

It was decided that both the utsavars – old and new will undergo thirumanjanam (Abhishekam). Post thirumanjanam, iravadi theertham (water from wet dress after thirumanjanam) will be provided to old dhobi who will be able to get it and say which utsavar was old Azhagiyamanavalan.

Both the utsava deities' thirumanjanam was performed parallelly. Post thirumanjanam iravadi theertham (water from wet dress after thirumanjanam) was given to Rajakanda Gopalan who had very feeble eyesight.

The minute he had iravadi theertham of old Azhagiyamanavalan he screamed he is “Namperumal’ meaning our old utsava deity. From that day onwards Azhagiyamanavalan is being called Namperumal popularly. As the new utsava deity was occupying “Thiruvarangam palace” he was named Thiruvarangamaligayar (occupant of the palace of Sri Rangam). This devotee's name is mentioned as “Rajakanda Gopalan” by Acharya Manavalamamunigal.

The old deity is the Thiruvarangamaligayar, which the temple administrators decided to keep on the altar itself near the lotus feet of the main deity of Lord Ranganatha. Now also people can have darshan of both deities in the temple of Sri Rangam. Further, Lord Namperumal deity adored the auspicious Kunkuma (vermilion), which is the sign of victory, that’s why Lord Ranganatha is “Bhadra Kunkumaliptha – One who has auspicious Kunkuma (vermilion) adhering to him.”

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Holy Name 43: Srimurthi

Mantra: Om Srimurthaye namah

Meaning – One who is Supreme Lord, who incarnated as the auspicious deity form

Pastime – There have been so many kings, azhwars, and acharyas who have done countless Services to Sri Rangam temple. Among all of them, Jatavaraman Sundara Pandiyan (or) Sadayavaraman Sundara Pandiyan alone has a special place in Sri Ranganatha's heart. The only name that is being used daily during the thiruvaradhanam (Pooja) rituals of Lord Ranganatha is Sundara Pandiyan.

Sundara Pandiyan was the most powerful Pandiyan king and he was very attached to the deity of Lord Ranganatha, who mercifully incarnated for the fallen conditioned soul. Understanding the auspicious deity form of Lord Ranganatha, he submitted various offerings to Sri Rangam temple, which are unmatched. He was firmly convinced that Supreme Lord mercifully incarnated as Lord Ranganatha in his deity form. Further, his devotion to the deity incarnation of the Lord is exemplary, being the staunch devotee of Lord Vishnu who served the deities of Lordship in various temples. But, with his firm conviction, he served the deity of Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam. The glory and fame of his offerings reached too far-reaching lands to north India which is said to be one of the reasons for the Islamic invasion of the Sri Rangam temple in the 14th century. Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandiyan's service to Lord Ranganatha is incomparable and uncountable like his devotion to Lord.

Understanding Supreme Lord Ranganatha as appeared as Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam, Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandiyan or Jatavarman Sundarapandiyan dedicated his life in the service of Lord Ranganatha as a menial servant and did various services, which is countless. Once he donated 18 lakh gold coins to the Sri Rangam temple. The story of how he arrived at this figure is interesting. He had a huge balance made, in which the scales resembled boats. He set the boats afloat, and on one boat he put an elephant, and sat on it, with his armor and weapons. On the other side, he put gold coins, pearls, and precious stones, until the scales were balanced. He then donated the gold, pearls, and gems to the temple.

Once King Sadayavaraman Sundara Pandiyan was having Dharshan of Lord Ranganatha and thiruvaradhanam (Ritual) was happening. Lord Ranganatha's priest forgot to bring Padikam (a vessel to collect water from Lord's thiruvaradhanam). When priests were about to pour water they did not get the vessel and Lord's service can't delay. Seeing this, King Sadayavaraman Sundara Pandiyan immediately removed his crown and showed up to collect the water of Lord's thiruvaradhanam. Since that day the vessel is called Sundara Pandiyan. Now also the golden crown of the King is used to collect water, Padikam (Vessel) which matches the inverted crown.

Among the so many devotional services of Sadayavaraman Sundara Pandiyan's masterpiece is the gold plating of Pranavakara Vimanam or the Main tower of Sri Rangam. He made the temple glitter in gold so he had a special name "Ponveintha Perumal Sundarapandiya Thevar".

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Srimurthi – One who is Supreme Lord, who incarnated as the auspicious deity form," purpose

of appearing as the deity form is to accept the services from the devotees and people in general, and purify them and liberate them from the material existences. In this case, Lord Ranganatha from time immemorial accepting the offerings of various devotees and purifying them.

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Holy Name 44: Chitha ranjitha

Mantra: Om Chitha ranjithaya namah

Meaning – One whose form and pastimes please the mind (of the living entities)

Pastime – In Sri Rangam, Lord Sri Ranganatha wears the legendary Pandiyan Kondai (Hair bun) on his Thirumudi (head), encrusted with precious gems and rare stones mesmerizing all who look upon it.

Pandiyan Kondai (Hair updo) – which is another amazing service from Sundara Pandiyan. Generally, Namperumal wears Pandiyan kondai (Hair updo) for most of the important days including “Vaikunda Ekadasi Day”. This Pandiyan Kondai Perumal wears in 2 ways – one with a circle and the second without the circle on top. This Pandiyan Kondai has 3 parts: Base, Circle part with a hold in the center, and Top screw – which allows wearing with/without a circle.

Once Lord Ranganatha appeared in the dream of a devotee named, Alluri Venkatadri, who was then in service of Lord Varadaraja in Kanchipuram and ordained him to get him a new Pandiyan Kondai (Hair updo) as the present one has worn out. Alluri Venkatadri is a poor man and with his meager earnings, he made a model of Pandian Kondai and took it to Sri Rangam. It fits perfectly well and all were pleased. He toiled hard to save money and started preparing Pandiyan Kondai. It needed a gem to be put at the center. Again Lord Ranganatha appeared in his dream and asked him to get it from a diamond merchant in Calcutta and also indicated where it was kept. An emissary of Alluri Venkatadri went to Calcutta and told the merchant about the diamond, which Lord Ranganatha mentioned, he was not even aware of its existence in his box. He searched and found it and donated it. Alluri Venkatadri asked a Goldsmith to make the Kondai (Hair updo). Goldsmith too tried to steal and Lord Ranganatha again appeared in a dream and exposed the Goldsmith. Later it was prepared as per the wish of Lord Ranganatha and presented to him. The very same Pandiyan Kondai (Hair updo) adorns the deity of Lord Namperumal (Ranganatha) on all important days like Vaikunta Ekadasi, etc... Anyone who has the darshan of Lord Ranganatha wearing Pandiyan Kondai (Hair updo), it will mesmerize and pleases one's heart and makes his heart feel for Lord Ranganatha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Chitha ranjitha – One whose form and pastimes please the mind (of the living entities),” in this case, Lord Ranganatha’s divine play or act to get service from his dear devotee and after which, adoring that particular ornament and gives his darshan to all and pleases everyone.

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Holy Name 45: Sarva Lakshana Sampanna

Mantra: Om Sarva Lakshana sampannayai namah

Meaning – One who has all the transcendental bodily marks

Pastime – Once there was an argument between Saraswati, the consort of Brahma, and Lakshmi on superiority. They went to Indra, the king of celestial deities. Indra judged Lakshmi as superior and not satisfied with his argument, Saraswati went to her husband, Brahma. He also chose Lakshmi to be the superior one. Saraswati was unhappy with the decision and decided to stay away from Brahma. Brahma did a severe penance praying to Vishnu and planned to conduct an Ashvamedha sacrifice in Satyavrata Kshetra (Present-day Kanchipuram). Saraswati was still angry that the sacrifice, which usually is done along with consorts was done alone by Brahma. She tried to disrupt the sacrifice, Lord Brahma, who took shelter of Vishnu and as a result, Lord Vishnu interfered with his serpent Adishesha, Supreme Lord took the form of Ranganatha and reclined on Adishesha, as an obstacle for the River. Saraswati, on seeing Vishnu in her path, accepted her defeat and subsided in the form of river Vegavathi. As Vishnu interfered with the path of the river, it was termed Vegavani, then Vegannai, and gradually corrupted Vekka. Lord Ranganatha has got the name “Vegasethu – One who became a bridge for the River Vegavathi.” Actually, not only in this place, Lord Ranganatha became an obstacle to the River Vegavathi in three places, the first place where the Lord took the elongated form of Lord Ranganatha is Pallikonda, also known as Vada Arangam, the second place is Thiruparkadal near Kaveripakkam, and the third is Tiruvekkaa Temple as Vegasethu or later Lord got the name Yathothkari Perumal (Sonna Vannam Seitha Perumal) in Kanchipuram. In all these three places, Supreme Lord gives the darshan as Lord Ranganatha, the reclining posture of Lord Vishnu. Thus the sacrifice of Lord Brahma was successfully completed.

Over time, an Azhwar known as Thirumazhisai Azhwar, who was born to Bhargava Maharishi and Kanakangi in Jagannatha Perumal Temple, Thirumazhisai, Tamilnadu and fourth among all 12 Azhwar. When the fetus came out as just a lifeless lump of flesh with no arms and legs. The couple was depressed and left it under a bamboo bush and proceeded with their spiritual Journey. Lord Narayana blessed the "flesh" and it turned into a living being. Later, the child was picked up by a tribal couple named Thiruvalan and Pankajavalli or Pankaja Chelvi, who took good care of the child and it grew up to become Thirumazhisai Azhwar, Actually, the Thirumazhisai Azhwar had an eye on his right leg, which shows that he is not a normal being, he is transcendental personality.

When Thirumazhisai Azhwar grew up, he traveled far and wide and learned various religious practices, Finally, It is told that by the grace of Peya Azhwar, he comes to the path of Vaishnavism and becomes a great devotee of Lord Narayana. After traveling everywhere, he finally reaches Thiruvekka, the birth place of Poigai Azhwar.

Thirumalisai Azhwar had always traveled a lot and once again Azhwar sets out for a journey. Azhwar leaves for Thiru Vekka (in Kanchipuram) to serve the Reclining Lord Vegasethu. He is joined by Kanni Kannan, his ardent disciple, and brother. Azhwar and Kani Kannan spend their time serving the Lord. During this time an old woman who could barely walk straight started serving Azhwar and Kani Kannan daily. Impressed with her service, Azhwar asks the old lady what she wants. The old lady replies that she could not bear her old age, her wrinkled face, and so on. Azhwar immediately changes her to a beautiful young woman. The woman gratefully thanks Azhwar and feels very happy that she will be young

and beautiful forever. Soon, the king of the province, Pallavarayan sees her and immediately falls for her beauty. He sends word through his guards to the woman, who is only happy to marry the king and accepts the king's proposal. They both marry and live happily. But as years pass by the king is intrigued by his woman's unchanged beauty who never seems to age. Upon asking, she tells the king about her being an old woman and how she became young again by the grace of Thirumalisai Azhwar. She also adds that Azhwar's disciple Kanni Kannan visits the palace every day to seek alms (Azhwar and Kani Kannan would eat only by seeking alms, just like true sannyasis). The very day the king meets Kanni Kannan and asks him to bring his Guru, so he too can get the boon of ageless beauty. Kani Kannan strongly replies that Azhwar wouldn't come for the king's desires. The king then asks Kannan to take him to Azhwar. For this, Kanni Kannan says that Azhwar would not even see a person who has such worldly desires in him. Finally, the king asks Kani Kannan to sing a song in praise of him. Kannan tells that he will never sing for any person in this world and would sing only on Lord Narayana. Listening to this, the king is enraged and orders Kanni Kannan to leave his kingdom.

Kanni Kannan narrates the entire incident to Azhwar and requests permission from Azhwar to leave him and the kingdom. Azhwar says the he too will leave the kingdom and joins Kanni Kannan. As he leaves he goes to the temple of Thiru Vekka and asks the Perumal too to leave the kingdom and join them. Without asking anything and the very moment, Perumal rolls his mat (Adhisesha), and like an innocent child follows Azhwar and Kanni Kannan. To this day the Perumal is called Sonna Vanam Seidha Perumal (Yadhodkaari in North) since He unquestioningly listens to Azhwar and does what he says. This single incident from the life of Azhwar stands out wonderfully and beautifully shows the Sowlabhyam of Perumal. Sriman Narayana is waiting for instructions from his true devotees, just like a baby towards its mother.

Meanwhile, without Azhwar and Perumal, the entire kingdom suddenly plunges into gloom and the people long for Perumal and Azhwar to come back to their kingdom. The King immediately realizes his folly and pleads to the trio to return to the Kingdom. Kanni Kanna is moved and requests Azhwar to return, who in turn requests Perumal to return to the kingdom. The Trio then returns to the kingdom, which again gets back its happiness and peacefulness. The place where Perumal, Azhwar, and Kanni Kannan rested for a night came to be known as "Oar Irukkai" and is now known as Oarikkai. Then onwards, Lord Vegasethu Ranganatha received the name, Yadhodkari (Sonna Vanam Seidha Perumal).

In the life of Thirumazhisai Azhwar, the incident with Pallava King is very significate to show his devotion to Lord Hari, usually, all will hear the commands of the Supreme Lord, but in Thirumazhisai Azhwars case, Lord hears the command of him and acts according to his command and as a result, the deity itself changed the position and giving darshan. From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sarva Lakshana Sampanna – One who has all the transcendental bodily marks," in this case the main transcendental bodily marks of Lord are that, Lord Yadhodkari's sleeping position, which is reversed, and whoever has the darshan of Supreme Lord Yadhodkari, the sleeping form of Lord Ranganatha, they will immediately understand his glorious deed and glorify his activities.

Yet another pastime,

Born in Thiru Mandangudi, Thondaradipodi Azhwar (his original name was Vipra Narayana) was lost in love with Lord Ranganatha of Sri Rangam. Very early in his life, he moved from Thiru Mandangudi to Sri Rangam and mastered himself in Vedas. His devotion was so enduring that he thought of none but Ranganatha. This devotion meant that he decided to sing praise only of the Lord of Sri Rangam and of no other Lord. Dedicating his life to the service of Lord Ranganatha, he created a beautiful Nandavanam in Sri Rangam and with a basket in hand immersed himself in collecting flowers and making beautiful garlands for the Lord every day.

Once having heard of the Lord accepting Thirumazhisai Azhwar's request to come out of the kingdom in Thiruvekka near Kanchipuram and provide a special Maaru Sayanam posture there on his return, and another special posture in Kumbakonam with his Uththana Sayanam as Aaravamuthan (Sarangapani), Thondaradipodi was keen that he too be given a special darshan from his favorite Lord Ranganatha. Lord Ranganatha, who stays at Sri Rangam, promised to provide such a darshan but asked him to go to his birthplace at Thiru Mandangudi. Unwillingly, he left Sri Rangam and reached Thiru Mandangudi. To his surprise, he saw Lord Rangantha waiting for him in a special and rare standing posture to provide darshan along with Sri and Bhoo Devi. As Lord Ranganatha surprised Thondaradi Podi Azhwar with this special standing darshan at his very own birthplace, he is referred to as 'Varam Tharum – Lord who fulfills the wishes of his devotees' Perumal and is believed to accede to and grant sincere prayers of the devotees who visit this temple at Thiru Mandangudi.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sarva Lakshana Sampanna – One who has all the transcendental bodily marks," in this case, Lord Ranganatha, especially in Sri Rangam, not wished to change his position, because that position which he is was appeared to Brahma and worshipped by all the great Kings including Lord Rama himself. His transcendental form of reclining on the Adisesha is the bodily mark of his representation. That's why, he asked his dear devotee, Thondaradi Podi Azhwar to go to Thiru Mandangudi, where he gave his beautiful darshan in the standing form of Lord Ranganatha. And also, Ranganatha means reclining posture, that is the Lakshana, so Lord enacted this pastime for his dear devotee, Thondaradi Podi Azhwar.

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Holy Name 46: Shanthatma

Mantra: Om Shanthathmane namah

Meaning – One who is always peaceful

Pastime – Sri Raghavendra Tirtha had written more than 50 literature. Once his disciples asked Sri Raghavendra Tirtha, "You have done great work by writing so much literature. Already Kaliyuga's influence is there. Who will utilize all your works?" For that Sri Raghavendra Tirtha replied, "The third seer after me will be Sri Sumateendra Tirtha, who will do all the work". And it was Sri Sumateendra Tirtha, third after Sri Raghavendra Tirtha, who did that work.

Sri Sumateendra Tirtha was a great scholar. He had written 6 literature before taking Sannyasa and 34 literatures after taking Sannyasa.

Sri Sumateendra Tirtha has done great service in bringing Madhwa Lineage in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, most of the Marathi people are Madhwas, it is also due to him.

When entire South India was in grip of Mayavada, irreligion, etc… even Kings were under its influence and were patrons to pseudo religions. Sri Sumateendra Tirtha while his travel, used to write excellent literature and poems with which and with his mystic power restored the faith of people and brought back the Kings to Vaishnavism. He upheld Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord amidst stiff challenges. Sri Sumateendra Tirtha is also the guardian saint of Sri Rangam, Lord Ranganatha Swami temple. Once a black magician, by applying on himself an eye lotion, which made him invisible, hid inside the main shrine of Lord Ranganatha. He, by chanting evil mantras, took away the luster of the deity of Lord Ranganatha. To survive, he used to swallow the offerings. Sri Sumateendra Tirtha saw through this sinister game, through his mystic power. He directed the temple priests that the offering was to be cooked with an abundance of pepper. The magician while consuming the offering, started shedding tears profusely and in the process, rubbed off the eye lotion and exposed himself, and got caught. To prevent a recurrence, Sri Sumateendra Tirtha installed a Lord Hanuman deity in the Sri Rangam temple.

Yet another time,

Swami Nanjeeyar, the disciple of Koorathalwan, and the great Acharya in Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya were very popular due to his divine and magical powers. He had vanquished the Shaivites through Narasimha Yantra. Shaivites were constantly opposing him. Once the river was flooded and it was about to carry down the procession deity of Lord Ranganatha, which was on the boat. He protected the deity with his mystic powers. Later, he organized the event in the pond instead of River. Further, once Prompted by a king then ruling at Srirangapatnam in Mysore, a sanyasi, who was adept in black magic, with the desire to get the great wealth from the King of Mysore planned to remove the deity of Sri Rangam and take it to Srirangapatnam, for which, he made himself invisible through his art and entering the Sri Rangam temple with a plan to removing the main deity from Sri Rangam and take it to Srirangapatnam, attempted to lift the deity from its pedestal by magical incantation. The public, in great consternation, sought the help of the Swami Nanjeeyar, who by a clever trick, made the sanyasi visible but finding that he had black magic powers, compromised with him by the offer of costly clothes and ornaments and got the deity installed in its original position. The black magician's purpose is fulfilled, he left the place with the accumulated wealth. Then, Swami Nanjeeyar, however, by another clever ruse got the sanyasi slain while he was on his way to Srirangapatnam and had the valuables restored to the temple.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Shanthatma – One who is always peaceful,” in this case, even though in front of Lord Ranganatha, the magician’s power is least, still, Lord Ranganatha, who assumed the form of deity, follows the system of deity and completely depend on his devotees for everything, he himself not protect or persist anything, whatever way his devotees maintain him, he will accept it and stay, that is the system Lord made for his incarnation as a deity (Archavatra). In the same manner, Lord Ranganatha was attacked by Islamic forces, cripple-minded people like this magician, etc… still, he was completely peaceful and depended on his devotees. Another aspect is Lord Ranganatha being the Supreme Lord controls the entire

creation and all the living entities, so nothing will go against his will, everything occurs according to his will, so he is peaceful without any tension, even though sometimes it appears to be.

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Holy Name 47: Theertha Nayaka

Mantra: Om Theertha Nayakaya namah

Meaning – One who is the lord of sacred waters or holy tirthas

Pastime – Thirumala or Venkatachala is the abode of Lord Srinivasa (Venkatesha). The seven hills of Tirumala hills are full of sacred water sources or holy tirthas. According to Brahma Purana and Skanda Purana, there are about 66 crores of holy tirthas on the green cover of the Venkatachala ranges. From the epic ages till today, the holy tirthas of Tirumala (Venkatachala) are famous for their sacredness and divinity. Almost all the sacred water bodes hold fantastic legends and stories of salvation. In fact, these legends are the driving force that led lakhs of pilgrims to this temple town each day even today for ages. Sacred epics say that every stone, tree, sand particle, air, bird, and animal dwelling in the sacred Venkatachala ranges that house the world-famous hill shrine of Lord Venkateshwara is manifested with divinity.

Understanding the divinity of the holy abode of Thirumala (Venkatachala), once a devotee (Araiyar), who is a resident of Sri Rangam whose service is to sing the Pashurams (compositions) of Azhwars for the pleasure of Lord Ranganatha, wished to visit Thirumala to have the darshan of Lord Venkateshwara. Being the adherent devotee of Lord Ranganatha, he wants to take permission from Lord Ranganatha before planning his travel to Thirumala. Lord Ranganatha, who did not like to send his adherent devotee to Thirumala, in case, if they get mesmerized by the abode of Lord Venkateshwara, they will never return, at the same time, Lord Ranganatha directly not want to tell his dear devotee about his displeasure. So Lord Ranganatha asked his devotee, whose service itself is singing Pashurams for his pleasure, to sing the 10 Pashurams (verses) composed by Thiruppan Azhwar, which is known as Amalanadipiran before he starts his journey. The devotee is very happy about Lord's desire, thinking that after he completes his recitation or singing, he can start his journey to the holy abode, Thirumala. So keeping this in mind, he started the recitation and was completely immersed in it. Among the verses, the 3rd verse states that,

amalanathipiran adiyarkku ennai atpaduththa
vimalan vinnavarkon viraiyarpozhil venkadavan
nimalan ninmalan neethivanavan neenmathilarankaththamman thiruk
kamalapathamvanthu enkanninullana okkinrathe

Meaning: Devoid of anything impure, responsible for all creations, helping me, making me a servant to His devotees, of brilliant light, the Lord of liberated souls, Venkateshwara, who is the Lord of the scented forests of Venkatachala, one who helps without expecting anything in return, ruling the spiritual world, where justice always exists, residing as Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam, which is made of lofty walls. Let his lotus feet on their own come and stay inside my eyes.

5th verse states that

manthipay vadavengadamamalai vanavarkal
santhiseyya ninranarangaththaravinanaiyan
anthipolniraththadaiyum athanmelayanaippadaiththathorezhil
unthimelathanro adiyenullaththinnuyire

Meaning: He who stands in the mountains of the northern Venkatachalam, where male monkeys leap (from branch to branch), where liberated souls worship Him with sacred flowers, He who rests in Sri Rangam, lying on the serpent bed of Anantha (Adisesha), upon His red dress and upon His most beautiful navel which created Lord Brahma, has my inner heart settled.

When the Araiyar devotee complete his singing specifical these verses in front of Lord Ranganatha, he reflected on this and conveyed a change of his decision and told that he will not travel to Thirumala and stay in Sri Rangam and continue his services. Actually, Lord Ranganatha wished to convey to his devotee that, he himself present before him, who is none other than Lord Venkateshwara, the master of all the holy places and sacred waters, then what is the need of traveling to Venkatachala for having darshan and taking a dip in the tirthas of Venkatachala. The essence of his Yatra to the sacred hill Venkatachala is Lord Venkateshwara and Lord Ranganatha is none other than him, which is the conclusion of Tiruppan Azhwar. These instructions made the Araiyar devotee change his decision about his travel and stay in Sri Rangam and continue his services.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Theertha Nayaka – One who is the lord of sacred waters or holy tirthas,” in this case the actual message Lord Ranganatha conveyed to Araiyar devotee is this. The Lord and master of holy tirthas were there with him as Lord Ranganatha at Sri Rangam, then what is the need to travel to Venkatachala for taking his holy dip in tirthas there?

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Holy Name 48: Ranganayikeesa

Mantra: Om Ranganayikeesaya namah

Meaning – One who is the lord of Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki

Pastime – Panguni Uttaram day, which is the Thirunakshathram (appearance day) for Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki at Sri Rangam. It is on this day that both Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki share a Simhasanam (throne) and bless the thronging devotees. It is the only day when the Divya Dampati (transcendental couple) sit next to each other, in the whole year. With Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki by his side, Lord Ranganatha sheds his tough stance and softens up to the devotees. Devotees were able to see with their physical eyes the great truth declared by the Sastras that the Divya-Dampati together is the Supreme Godhead.

On one such Panguni Uttaram day, Sri Ramanuja went to the shrine to worship Lord Ranganatha and Sriranga Nacciyar. The vision of the Divine Couple on the same couch sent him into raptures and gave rise to a stream of thoughts in his mind. He concluded that it would be a good opportunity to perform Saranagati at the feet of the Divya Dampatis as laid down by the scriptures.

The next moment the Saranagati was performed by Sri Ramanuja and Saranagati-gadya was born of him for the benefit of humanity at large. It is a complete record first hand of all that happened on that memorable occasion a record of Ramanuja's seeking refuge at the feet of the Divya-Dampatis, his prayer to Them, and Their own reply blessing him with all that he prayed for.

Saranagati-gadya is in the form of a dialogue, first between Sri Ramanuja and Lakshmi (Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki) and later between him and Narayana, (Lord Ranganatha). At the outset, Sri Ramanuja performs Saranagati at the feet of Lakshmi and prays that She must bless with success his desire to perform Saranagati to the Lord. Lakshmi not only grants his prayer at once but also blesses him that he will obtain all the boons resulting therefrom.

Then Sri Ramanuja invokes Lord Ranganatha in impassioned language making special reference to His essential nature, personal features, auspicious qualities, sentient ornaments and weapons, Divine Consorts Sri, Bhumi, and Nila, His retinue of Nityasuris or eternally liberated souls, and His Glory in the form of the two vibhutis of Enjoyment and Sport (Bhoga and Lila). Pleased by the surrender of Sri Ramanuja, Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki recommends him to Lord Ranganatha. Lord Ranganatha blesses Sri Ramanuja and his followers, not only then, but in the future also whoever surrenders to him (Sri Ramanuja), will obtain liberation from material entanglement.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Ranganayikeesa – One who is the lord of Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki," in this case, when Sri Ranga Nayaki, his eternal consort, was present, the Supreme Lord Ranganatha will be most compassionate and provide the blessings unlimitedly and sanctions the desires and wishes of devotees, who surrender to Sri Ranga Nayaki. Keeping this in mind, Sri Ramanuja surrendered to Sri Ranga Nayaki and obtained liberation from material entanglement, not only for him but for everyone who surrenders to him (Sri Ramanuja). Even though Lord Ranganatha is the supreme lord and all the living entities from Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki (Lakshmi) are his eternal servants, still, Supreme Lord always accepts the recommendation from his dear devotees, among them Goddess Lakshmi (Sri Ranga Nayaki) is the topmost, so he accepts her recommendation and grants them with the fulfillment of their desires.

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Holy Name 49: Yajna-murthi

Mantra: Om Yajna murthaye namah

Meaning – One who is the personification of sacrifice (yajna)

Pastime – In Sri Rangam, Once when Somasiyandan, a devotee who used to perform Soma Yajna (Yajna, which is very big and complicated), asks about Thiruvaradhana (Deity worshiping procedure) to his guru, Parasara Bhattar. Parasara Bhattar teaches him a detailed version of it. Parasara Bhattar being the Guru of Somasiyandan wish to teach a lesson to him and show him that, more than the details of Yajna or worship, the main thing is devotion. Along with devotion for the pleasure of the Lordship, any amount of detailed worship or yajna will be great, because Lord will appreciate the devotion aspect. So, Parasara Bhattar waited for an opportune moment.

After some days, once when Somasiyandan visits Parasara Bhattar in his Ashram, Parasara Bhattar was about to eat his meal and suddenly remembers that he had not done deity worship yet. He calls his assistant to bring his worshipable deity (Small personal deity of Lord Ranganatha) and he offers the prepared food to a deity and straight away starts eating the Prasadam. When Somasiyandan asks why detailed Thiruvaradhana (Deity worshiping procedure) is for him, but only a small and easy procedure, which he follows. Parasara Bhattar says for him even a small Thiruvaradhana is too much to handle because the moment he starts Thiruvaradhana he will be overwhelmed with emotions and faint, and for Somasiyandan even a big Thiruvaradhana is not sufficient, because he is a person who is used to performing Soma sacrifice which is very nature by big – so anything small will not satisfy him (Somasiyandan). You will consider the small worship or procedure as not the real devotion or worship, you are too attached to mere procedures more than the devotion aspect of it. Our main goal should be the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, who is the personification of sacrifice (yajna). Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad-Gita [9.27],

yat karosi yad asnasi
yaj juhosi dadasi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kurusva mad-arpanam

Meaning: Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform -- do that, O son of Kunti, as an offering to Me.

These merely small acts of the living entity will please the Lord and this is the sacrifice (Yajna) Supreme Lord appreciates a lot. In this way, Parasara Bhattar teaches that more than mere procedures, love and devotion are more important in deity worship or Yajna (sacrifice). After this, Somasiyandan's heart transforms and he started to perform all of his acts as the sacrifice or offering to Lord Ranganatha, considering Lord Raanganatha as the personification of all the sacrifices (yajnas) like daily activities, eating, sleeping, charity, austerities, etc…

From this incident, we can understand that, Lord Ranganatha is known as "Yajna-murthi – One who is the personification of sacrifice (yajna)."

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Holy Name 50: Hiranmaya

Mantra: Om Hiranmayaya namah

Meaning – One who is the predominating deity within the sun (is Hiranmaya, Lord Narayana) or One who possesses the body of gold-complexioned

Pastime – Dhyana mantra of Lord Narayana is,

(om) dhyeyah sada savitr-mandala-madhya-varti
narayanah sarasijasana-sannivistah
keyura-van kanaka-kundala-van kiriti
harir hiranmaya-vapur dhrta-sankha-cakrah

Meaning: Lord Narayana is seated on a lotus seat within the sun globe. He wears a crown, golden earrings, and armlets on His gold-complexioned body

(*hiranmaya*), and in His hands, He holds His conch and disc weapons. All these features make Him ever captivating. One should always meditate upon the Lord in this way.

Further, Sri Pey Azhwar sang in ecstasy upon his sighting of the Lord in his famous composition of Thiruvandhaadi, the first Pasuram from Moondram Thiruvandhaadi (1.1.1):

thiru kanden ponmeni kanden
tigazhum arukkan ani niramum kanden
serukkilarum ponnaazhi kanden
puri shankham kai kanden

Meaning: By His grace, I saw Maha Lakshmi (Thirukanden). I got the privilege of seeing the Lord's transcendental form shining like Gold (Ponmeni kanden). His effulgence was like that of a brilliant Sun. I saw the enemy-destroying, fiery, but beautiful chakram (in one hand); I saw also the Conch (Paanchajanyam) in His other hand. All of these I saw in my dear Ocean-hued Lord, Sriman Narayana.

The Maha-Vishnu, who is Purusa, lies down in some part of the spiritual sky by His own free will. Thus He lies on the ocean of karana, from where He glances over His material nature, and the mahat-tattva is at once created. Thus electrified by the power of the Lord, the material nature at once creates innumerable universes. The Karana Ocean is therefore called the Causal Ocean. Karana means "causal." The first purusa (Karanodakasayi Visnu), after creating innumerable universes in the mahat-tattva, entered in each of them as the second purusa, Garbhodakasayi Visnu. When He saw that within the universe there were only darkness and space, without a resting place, He filled half of the universe with water from His own perspiration and laid Himself down on the same water. This water is called Garbhodaka. Then from His navel the stem of the lotus flower sprouted, and on the flower petals the birth of Brahma, or the master engineer of the universal plan, took place. Brahma became the engineer of the universe, and the Lord Himself took charge of the maintenance of the universe as Visnu. Brahma was generated from rajo-guna of prakrti, or the mode of passion in nature, and Visnu became the Lord of the mode of goodness. Visnu, being transcendental to all the modes, is always aloof from materialistic affection. This has already been explained. From Brahma there is Rudra (Siva), who is in charge of the mode of ignorance or darkness. He destroys the whole creation by the will of the Lord. Therefore all three, namely Brahma, Visnu, and Siva, are incarnations of the Garbhodakasayi Visnu. From Brahma the other demigods like Daksa, Marici, Manu, and many others become incarnated to generate living entities within the universe. This Garbhodakasayi Visnu is glorified in the Vedas in the hymns of Garbha-stuti, which begin with the description of the Lord as having thousands of heads, etc. The Garbhodakasayi Visnu is the Lord of the universe, and although He appears to be lying within the universe, He is always transcendental. This also has already been explained. The Visnu who is the plenary portion of the Garbhodakasayi Visnu is the Supersoul of the universal life, and He is known as the maintainer of the universe or Ksirodakasayi Visnu. So the three features of the original purusa are thus understood. And all the incarnations within the universe are emanations from this Ksirodakasayi Visnu.

After doing the primary creation and creating Lord Brahma in his navel, Lord Vishnu sees that the universe is by nature dense darkness, and therefore the

total creation is called tamas, or darkness. The night is the real feature of the universe, for then one cannot see anything, including oneself. Lord Vishnu, out of His causeless mercy, first desired to see Himself and all the creation as well, and thus the Sun became manifested, the power of vision for all living entities became possible, and the objects of vision were also manifested. This means that the whole phenomenal world became visible after the creation of the Sun. By the influence of its radiation, the Sun heats the universe and maintains its proper order. He also gives light to help all living entities see. While passing toward the north, toward the south, or through the equator, in accordance with the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is said to move slowly, swiftly, or moderately.

In Brahma-Samhita [Bs 5.52],

yac-caksur esa savita sakala-grahanam
raja samasta-sura-murtir asesa-tejah
yasyajnaya bhramati sambhrta-kala-cakro
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami

Meaning: The sun who is the king of all the planets, full of infinite effulgence, the image of the good soul, is the eye of this world. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda in pursuance of whose order the sun performs his journey mounting the wheel of time.

Lord Surya Narayana is a representation of the Personality of Godhead Shri Vishnu in the material world. Further, Surya is constantly in touch with Lord Narayana or Vishnu. The Sun (Surya) is the father of this material universe because he controls time and provides sustenance. Wherever there is either not enough Sun or too much of his energy—either way, the Universe can be destroyed. For this reason, Surya is constantly moving. If he were to stop even for a second he could burn to a crisp that place over which he hovers. On the other hand, if he were to move too fast then the world would freeze. In this way the Sun stands as the ultimate epitome of discipline, never deviating from his course. Vivasvan, the deity of the Sun, is the ultimate king and an inspiration to all other righteous kings. For this reason, the kings have been called Raja.

Lord Narayana, who is the source and maintainer of the Sun planet and who is an expansion of Lord Vishnu, is present on the Sun planet as Lord Narayana with a golden complexion body and maintains or oversees the activities of the entire Sun planet and creation. Being present in the Sun planet, Lord Narayana instructed the sun god, Vivasvan, with the Supreme knowledge, which is mentioned by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita [BG 4.1],

sri-bhagavan uvaca
imam vivasvate yogam
proktavan aham avyayam
vivasvan manave praha
manur iksvakave 'bravit

Meaning: The Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krsna, said: I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu, in turn, instructed it to Iksvaku.

In this way, the supreme knowledge was passed down by Disciplic succession. Similarly, when Lord Brahma performed his penances, Lord Vishnu appeared to him, who is none other than Lord Narayana, who possessed a golden complexioned body and abode present in the sun planet, appeared to Lord Brahma, which is nothing but, Lord Ranganatha appeared along with Ranga Vimana or Hirnamaya Vimana, to Lord Brahma. After Lord's appearance along with dazzling Hirnamaya Vimana, Lord Brahma called all of his sons, demigods and sages, Surya, Manu, etc… Performed great worship to the Lordship. This deity, which was worshipped by Lord Brahma was also worshipped by Surya, Manu, Ikshvaku, etc… in Satyaloka. Later, as per the desire of Surya, who wished for the Lord's appearance in his clan, Lord Ranganatha ascended to his request and was further pleased by Ikshvaku's penances and left Satyaloka and arrived at the solar dynasty, the clan of Surya, and worshipped by all the kings of the solar clan, which is similar to the transcendental knowledge, which was passed on in that disciplic succession.

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Hiranmaya – One who is the predominating deity within the sun (is Hiranmaya, Lord Narayana) or One who possesses the body of gold-complexioned," the same personality, who resides in the sun globe with the gold-complexioned body, appeared to Lord Brahma as Lord Ranganatha along with Ranga Vimana, later he moved to the clan of sun, which is Surya dynasty and worshipped by all the kings and later arrived at Sri Rangam.

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Holy Name 51: Pranavakarasadana

Mantra: Om Pranavakara Sadanaya namah

Meaning – One whose abode is of the shape of Pranava (Om) or One who possesses the home which is of the syllable "Om"

Pastime – In Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna says [BG 7.8],

raso 'ham apsu kaunteya
prabhasmi sasi-suryayoh
pranavah sarva-vedesu
sabdah khe paurusam nrsu

Meaning: O son of Kunti, I am the taste of water, the light of the sun and the moon, the syllable om (Pranava) in the Vedic mantras; I am the sound in ether and ability in a man.

Pranava, or the omkara transcendental sound at the beginning of every Vedic hymn, addresses the Supreme Lord. Because the impersonalists are very much afraid of addressing the Supreme Lord Vishnu by His innumerable names, they prefer to vibrate the transcendental sound omkara. But they do not realize that omkara is the sound representation of Vishnu. In all the Vedic mantras the word om, called pranava, is a transcendental sound vibration and is also Vishnu. And because the pranava, or omkara, is very prominent in all the hymns of the four Vedas -- Sama, Yajur, Rg, and Atharva -- they are also understood to be Vishnu.

Further, at the beginning of the creation, Lord Brahma was perplexed, Supreme Lord Vishnu guided him in his heart to engage in penances by chanting "Om"

(Pranava), so accordingly, he meditated on the Supreme Lord by chanting the syllable “Om”. After that, Lord Vishnu appeared and blessed him with the ability to create. After creation, further, he engaged in penance, Lord gave him the Astakashri mantra, which starts with Pranava (Om), pleased by his penances Lord Ranganatha appeared to him in the Pranavakara Vimana (Tower in the shape of Om) to show the world that, he is the object of the syllable Om or Pranava and also, his residence is in the Pranava.

Bhagavad Dhyana Sopanam is a stotra patterned upon a Prabandham (Azhwar’s composition). It is in praise of Lord Ranganatha of Sri Rangam. Tiruppaan Azhwar vouchsafed a vision of that great Supreme Lord Ranganatha, and he has sung about what he then saw, in ten verses. Later, the great Acharya in Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya and also an incarnation of Lord’s Ghanta (Bell), Sri Vedanta Desika enjoys the same Tirumeni (transcendental body) of the same reclining beauty of Lord Ranganatha in the same manner, i.e., from the Feet to the Head; but he relishing the same in his mind by meditation contemplation. The reason for this is, during the time of Sri Vedanta Desikan, for several years the situation is bad in Sri Rangam. So, Sri Vedanta Desikan was forced to be away from Sri Rangam, due to the invasion by the Islamic army, and he stayed in the Satyakala region in Karnataka. During then, Sri Vedanta Desikan, who felt great separation from his beloved Lord Ranganatha mediated on the transcendental form of Lord Ranganatha by reciting the verses of Tiruppaan Azhwar, and with that inspiration, he composed verses or stotra describing the transcendental form of Lord Ranganatha and his divine abode and for which he gave the name Bhagavad Dhyana Sopanam, Contemplation on Supreme Lord Ranganatha’s transcendental form and his abode, Sri Rangam.

Bhagavad Dhyana Sopanam verses are structured as, Sopanam which literally means steps, the several stages from the lotus feet to the head of Lord Ranganatha’s meditation (verses 2 to 9). Verse 10 recapitulates those eight parts of the Lord’s transcendental body. Verse 11 refers to the utsava murti (procession deity of Lord Ranganatha) — the Smiling Beauty standing in front of the Main deity, which is reclining on the Adisesha (Serpent Couch). The last one of course is the Phalasruti. In all the twelve verses of the Stotra, Sri Vedanta Desikan poured out his emotions and feeling of mind, due to his separation from Lord Ranganatha and the abode, Sri Rangam. Whatever Sri Vedanta Desikan states in verse one of this composition is said to reside in Desikan’s heart. That first verse states,

anthar jyothi: kimapi yaminam anjanam yogadhrushte:
chintha rathnam sulabhamiha na: siddhi mokshanuroopam
dhinanata vysanasamanam dhaivathaanam
dhivyam chakshu: sruthiparishadham dhrusyathe rangamadhye

Meaning: Lord Ranganatha’s transcendental form is a unique effulgence that Yogis alone can experience in their mind! That form is the magic collyrium that brings a thing perceptible to the ocular vision as well! That form is the veritable Chithamani (Touchstone)that can grant one’s desires, at once and easily; be it a mundane wish or otherworldly enjoyment; That form is capable of eradicating the grief of the poor and helpless; That form proclaims that he is the Lord of all Lords! That form is the eyes of the Vedas in their legion! What is that form? It is that transcendental form of Lord Ranganatha, who can be seen in the heart of Sri Rangam shrine under the Pranavakara Vimanam!

Sri Vedanta Desikan glorifies Lord Ranganatha, who reclines in the home or shrine, which is having the Vimanam of the shape, Pranavakara (Om). The great experts in Silpa Saasthra believe that "Temple is not merely a Home of Lord, but a form of Lord as well". When One combines the Vimaanam at Sri Rangam and the front Mantapam of the temple shrine, it can be observed that the form of the Tamil letter “O” links the shape to Pranavam (Om). It appears like a Valampuri or Valam Suzhi Vimaanam like the trunk of an elephant. The whole Garbha Graham (inner sanctum) with its extension front Mantapam has to be taken into account to visualize the Tamil letter, "O" which is formed from a symmetrical ellipse with extended legs on its incomplete sides. Such is the greatness of the Pranavakara Vimanam that is casting its rejuvenating shade at Sri Rangam It is also understood as the blossoming and protrusion of the combined essence of “Oli” (primordial sound) and “Oli” (Svayam Jyothi of the Lord) taking the shape of Pranavakara Vimaanam. One can visualize the Pranavakara Vimanam to have 18 units: four Kalasams, each one standing for one of the Vedas, the Vimanam, Sri Ranganatha, Sri Ranganayaki Thayar and eleven Azhwars, who sang combinedly 245 Pashurams for Lord Ranganatha.

The important verse sung by parrot for the King Killicholan and also associated with the shrine of Lord Ranganatha at Sri Rangam is,

kaveri viraja seyam vaikuntham rangamandiram
sa vasudevo rangesah pratyaksham paramam padam
vimanam pranavakaram veda srungam mahatbhutam
srirangasayi bhagvan pranavartha prakasakah

Meaning: The river Kaveri is the very same Viraja River flowing in Vaikuntham and the temple in Sri Rangam is Vaikuntham itself, the abode of Vishnu. The Lord of Sri Rangam is none other than Vasudeva Himself. The Vimanam is in the form of Pranava—the life-sustaining mantra. The towers are like the Vedas and the Lord Rangasayi (Ranganatha) is enunciating the import of the Pranavam (Om).

From this, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Pranavakarasadana – One whose abode is of the shape of Pranava (Om) or One who possesses the home which is of the syllable “Om”.”

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Holy Name 52: Prathartha Pradhayaka

Mantra: Om Prathartha Pradhayakaya namah

Meaning – One who is the grantor of wealth (both material and spiritual) to his worshipper

Pastime – Thirumangai Azhwar focused all his energies on completing the Sri Rangam temple construction at the earliest and spent all the money that he had generated by cheating the captain of the ship and selling the golden idol, even before the work could be completed. Further, sometimes Lord Ranganatha provided wealth in the form of treasure to Thirumangai Azhwar. Still, the funds were short. As he did not have the necessary funds to complete the work, he promised the contractors and artisans that he would settle their dues from the treasure that he had hidden in one of the islands in the course of River Kaveri and get the work completed. The contractors started demanding their dues and

Thirumangai Azhwar kept on postponing their payments by giving them some reason or the other. The frustrated contractors ganged up against Thirumangai Azhwar and asked him to settle their dues immediately.

Thirumangai Azhwar prayed to Lord Ranganatha, Supreme Lord Ranganatha told him, “Bring them on the boat at the center of River Kaveri telling them that they will get their dues. When they arrive there, I will give them the Supreme wealth, which is liberation from material entanglement. But, don’t mention this to contractors.” As told by Supreme Lord Ranganatha, Thirumangai Azhwar asked all of them to accompany him to the island to help him unearth the hidden treasure and to make their payments. The unsuspecting contractors accompanied Thirumangai Azhwar in a ferry that was being guided by Neer-Mel-Nadapavan, one of Thirumangai Azhwar ’s associates, and they started to sail through the swirling waters of Cauvery. As instructed by Thirumangai Azhwar, Neer-Mel-Nadapavan, who could walk on water, stopped the ferry in between the Kaveri River, and by the divine intervention of the Lord, the ferry sunk at that place where the contractors couldn't swim back to the banks and escaped from there and all the contractors drowned to death. Along with Thirumangai Azhwar his associates escaped from there.

Thirumangai Azhwar returned to Sri Rangam and told the relatives of the contractors that are captivated by the natural beauty of the island, the contractors had decided to stay on the island for a few days and had requested him to inform their relatives about it. After thus eliminating his creditors and hoodwinking their relatives, Thirumangai Azhwar started doing devotional service to Lord Ranganatha. As days rolled on, the relatives of the contractors started becoming suspicious when the contractors did not return and started asking Thirumangai Azhwar to take them to the island to see the contractors. They also started accusing Thirumangai Azhwar of having murdered the contractors.

As the clamor gained momentum, Thirumangai Azhwar got disturbed, and as his devotional service was getting affected he requested Lord Ranganatha to help him overcome the crisis and save him from the wrath of the relatives of the contractors. The Lord appeared in Thirumangai Azhwar ’s dream and asked him not to worry. The Lord instructed Thirumangai Azhwar to ask the relatives of the contractors to assemble in the temple hall at a designated time after taking bath in river Cauvery and to invoke their relatives by their names. The Lord assured Thirumangai Azhwar that the deceased contractors would personally convince their relatives not to trouble him further.

The relatives of the contractors followed Thirumangai Azhwar ’s instructions and the contractors appeared from the Lord’s sanctum sanctorum in their ethereal form and said, “By the mercy of this saint we have attained liberation, which is very difficult to attain even for the yogis who have been doing penance since ages and we are staying with the Lord. Don’t trouble the saint, be obedient to him, and serve him if you want to attain this supreme state. Trust in the Lord and he will take care of you.” The contractors disappeared from there after speaking to their relatives. The relatives apologized to Thirumangai Azhwar for having troubled him and offered their obeisance to him before leaving. Thirumangai Azhwar continued to serve the Lord.

The Padma Purana says, “Those who help in the construction of Lord Vishnu’s temple do not return to this material world, (instead) they go to the eternal abode of Lord Vishnu (after death).”

According to Vamana Purana – Whoever constructs or helps in constructing the temple of Lord Vishnu protects eight generations of his forefathers from falling to hell. Many other scriptures including Srimad Bhagavatam have reiterated the benefits of constructing or helping one to construct a temple to Lord Vishnu in similar terms. Thirumangai Azhwar practically proved the claims of the aforesaid scriptures to the world by the mercy of Lord Ranganatha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Prathartha Pradhayaka – One who is the grantor of wealth (both material and spiritual) to his worshipper,” in this case, Lord Ranganatha provided sometimes the material wealth to Thirumangai Azhwar, also he gave a spiritual wealth of devotional services to Thirumangai Azhwar, and also a supreme spiritual wealth of liberation to the constructers of Sri Rangam temple when he requested by his devotee, Thirumangai Azhwar.

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Holy Name 53: Godha Praneshwara

Mantra: Om Godha Praneswaraya namah

Meaning – One who is the lord and beloved master of Goddess Godha (Andal)

Pastime – Azhwars are considered the 12 devotees of Lord Narayana, who were instrumental in popularising Vaishnavism in the Tamil-speaking regions. The Azhwars were influential in promoting the Bhagavata cult and the two Hindu epics, namely, Ramayana and Mahabaratha. The religious works of Azhwars in Tamil, songs of love and devotion, are compiled as Nalayira Divya Prabandham containing 4000 verses and the 108 temples revered in their songs are classified as Divya desams.

The verses of the various azhwars were compiled by Nathamuni, a 10th-century Vaishnavite theologian, who called it the "Dravida Veda or Tamil Veda". The songs or Divya Prabandam are regularly sung in all the Vishnu temples around the world.

Periya Azhwar, the foster father of Sri Andal was born in Srivilliputhur, in a Brahmin family, he was named Vishnuchittar by his parents.

Periya Azhwar was very devoted to Lord Narayana, he dedicated himself to the Nandavanam (flower garden), plucking flowers and weaving an excellent garland, enjoying seeing Lord Narayana wearing the garlands. He used to get immense satisfaction and happiness from singing songs in praise of the Lord Narayana. He is married to a devoted lady named Virajai and many years for they there is no Children, but they are happily living by the mercy of the Lord Narayana.

One fine day Vishnu-Chitta (Periya Azhwar) went to the flower garden as usual and, to his surprise, found a girl baby playing in the shade of the Tulasi plants. The baby was glowing with spiritual radiance and was looking divine. He looked

to see if anyone was around and as he did not find anyone, he took the baby home and started to nurture her like his daughter. He named the baby Goda.

Goda is said to be the manifestation of Bhu-devi, one of the consorts of the Supreme Lord, and is worshipped as the manifestation of the material energy of the Lord. Unlike normal human beings, Goda was not born out of the mother's womb. Therefore, she is called Ayonija.

As she ruled over the Lord's heart and continues to rule over the hearts of the devotees she is called Andal. Goda appeared on this planet in the 97th year of Kali-yuga.

As Hari-Katha, glories and pastimes of the Lord, was being frequently discussed at Vishnu-Chitta's house and Sri Villiputtur, Goda started to love the Lord at a very young age. She dreamt of marrying Him. She used to wear the floral wreaths prepared by her father Vishnu-Chitta for the Lord in his absence and look into the mirror to see if she would become a suitable bride for the Lord, who is considered to be a repository and source of every auspicious quality. She used to remove the wreaths and keep them back in the basket before her father returned.

Vishnu-Chitta, who was ignorant of his daughter's obsession and deeds, used to offer the same garlands to the Lord. Once when Vishnu-Chitta was about to take the garlands to the temple he noticed a strand of hair on the garlands and concluded that the hair belonged to Goda.

Goda confessed her deeds when Vishnu-Chitta asked her how her hair found its way to the flower basket and Vishnu-Chitta admonished Goda for doing such sacrilegious things. As Vishnu-Chitta used to prepare the garlands by tying a cloth around his nose to avoid smelling the flowers before they are offered to the Lord, he considered Goda's actions to be offensive and sacrilegious. He did not offer the garlands to the Lord that day.

The Lord appeared in Vishnu-Chitta's dream that night and directed Vishnu-Chitta to offer Him only those garlands that were worn by Goda and asked Vishnu-Chitta not to admonish Goda for wearing the garlands. The Lord also told Vishnu-Chitta that the garlands acquire a special fragrance after they are worn by Goda.

Since then Vishnu-Chitta started to offer the garlands to the Lord only after they were worn by Goda. As the Lord had also directed the chief priest of the temple, the priests also reverentially decorated the Lord with the garlands offered by Vishnu-Chitta. As Goda gave the garlands that she wore to the Lord, she is popularly called Soodi-Kudutha-Nacchiyar. Krishnadeva Raya, the most popular emperor of the Vijayanagar empire, has written a poetic commentary called Amukta-malyada on this aspect of Goda.

As news of the Lord's longing for the garlands worn by Goda started to spread, the people around Goda started to acknowledge her greatness and treat her as a special child. Goda became indifferent to all the attention that was showered on her by focusing her mind on the Lord.

Her desire to unite with the Lord increased along with time. There was a tradition of getting the children married at a very early age during those days. Therefore

Vishnu-Chitta, who was unaware of Goda's attraction for the Lord, started to search for a suitable groom as a responsible father would do.

Goda, who had dedicated herself to the Lord, could not even digest the thought of getting married to any mortal. She requested Vishnu-Chitta to abandon his search and to tell her the easiest means to attain the Lord. Vishnu-Chitta was initially stunned to know about his daughter's unusual desire. However, he did not try to deter her from her obsession as the Lord had told him that his daughter was not an ordinary mortal when He had appeared in his dream.

Vishnu-Chitta directed his daughter to focus her attention on one particular deity form of the Lord as that would help her retain the Lord's image in her mind and to express her feeling to the Lord. Vishnu-Chitta told her about the glories of the deity forms in 108 Divya-Deshams.

Though Goda had not seen Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam she decided to marry the Lord in His deity form as Sri Ranganatha after Vishnu-Chitta told her about His magnanimity.

Vishnu-Chitta asked his daughter to observe Katyayini vrata, a vow that was observed by the Gopis to get good husbands, to persuade the all-merciful Lord to marry her soon. The Gopis had observed the vow for one day and had worshipped goddess Katyayini to attain good husbands.

But, Goda, who had completely surrendered to the Lord, could not think of any other deity. Therefore she decided to observe the vow for one month while worshipping the Supreme Lord to appease Him during the most auspicious Margashirsha month i.e. December – January.

Goda used to rise very early in the morning, bathe in cold water, worship the Lord by offering him various upacharas, fast for the entire day, and consume a small quantity of havis that was offered to the Lord in the evening.

Goda used to compile and dedicate one hymn to the Lord every day. Goda had compiled 30 hymns while observing the vow and those hymns are called Thiruppavai, which is the second most translated and commented work after Bhagavad-gita.

The most complex philosophical and theological concepts that were not revealed to women and people of all castes till then are enshrined in Thiruppavai in Tamil, which can be spoken and understood by people of all castes. The Vaishnavas try to emulate Goda by observing this vow even today during Margashirsha month. According to popular belief, the girls who observe this vow when they are young get good husbands when they reach marriageable age. Thiruppavai is chanted every day with devotion in the temples and Vaishnava households even today.

As the Lord did not appear even after the completion of thirty days, Goda became desperate and her longing for union with the Lord became more and more intense. Like the Gopis of yore, Goda had become mad with love and started requesting even the passing clouds to inform the Lord about her love for Him.

Lovelorn Goda compiled 143 hymns to express her intense desire for the Lord and dedicated them to Lord Venkatachalapathi of Tirupati. These hymns are called Nachiyar Thirumozhi.

As Goda's longing for union with the Lord started getting more and more intense, Vishnu-Chitta became anxious and started to pray to the Lord to grant her wish out of his concern for her.

One fine day, Lord Ranganatha appeared in Vishnu-Chitta's dream and asked him to bring his daughter to Sri Rangam. The Lord also told Vishnu-Chitta that He is willing to marry Goda, who was very devoted to Him.

Vishnu-Chitta became very happy and informed Goda and others about the Lord's desire to marry her. The people of Sri Villiputtur, who had great respect for Vishnu-Chitta, rejoiced after coming to know about the Lord's desire to marry the girl from their town.

As Goda was marrying the Supreme Lord, Vishnu-Chitta, who was leading a very humble life, had to organize the ceremony in a befitting manner and he did not have sufficient resources to meet the marriage expenditure. Therefore, he sent a learned priest to Madurai to inform king Vallabha Deva, who was Vishnu-Chitta's disciple, about the Lord's desire to marry Goda.

In the meantime, Lord Ranganatha appeared in His chief priest's dream and informed him about His desire to marry Goda and directed him to go to Sri Villiputtur along with other priests, devotees, and every necessary thing to bring Goda to Sri Rangam in a befitting manner.

The chief priest informed the administrators of the temple and other priests about the Lord's command and all of them were not only excited but also eager to participate in the Lord's wedding.

Some of the priests and devotees started to go in a grand procession to Sri Villiputtur to bring Goda while the others choose to remain in Sri Rangam to decorate the entire town in a befitting manner.

Immediately after coming to know about the Lord's desire, Vallabha Deva came with his huge army, which consisted of infantry, cavalry and innumerable elephants, a lot of devotees, and wealth to ensure that the Lord's wedding with Goda is celebrated in a grand manner.

The procession that started from Sri Rangam converged with Vallabha Deva's army at a particular point and all of them reached Sri Villiputtur. The people of Sri Villiputtur had by then decorated Goda in a suitable manner.

In accordance with the directions of her father, Vishnu-Chitta, and other senior scholars and devotees of Sri Villiputtur, Goda offered her prayers to Lord Vatapatra-Sayi, the presiding deity of Sri Villiputtur, and boarded the palanquin that was specially brought for her from Sri Rangam.

All those who had come to take Goda to Sri Rangam started their journey along with Goda. Vishnu-Chitta and their relatives and the people of Sri Villiputtur involuntarily joined the procession to witness the celestial wedding.

Even as Goda's bridal procession reached the outskirts of Sri Rangam, Vallabha Deva and the chief priest of Sri Ranganatha sent a few messengers to inform the residents of Sri Rangam about the arrival of the bridal procession.

Lord Ranganatha's priests and innumerable devotees came to the gates of Sri Rangam fort, which was decorated like never before, and received the bride with a lot of respect after having suitably honored her father, Vishnu-Chitta.

Goda was taken in procession around all the seven prakaras, i.e., fort-like walls constructed around the temple for the sake of those who were eagerly waiting to have a glimpse of her personality, and finally, the procession reached the thousand-pillared hall of Sri Ranganatha's temple, which was the marriage venue.

Lord Ranganatha's priest performed all the rituals related to the marriage in an elaborate manner. It is said that Vallabha Deva and other devotees had organized a grand feast for all the devotees who had come to witness the Lord's wedding and the marriage was performed with unprecedented grandeur.

Goda, who is worshipped as the personification of devotion and pure love for god, merged with the deity of the Lord in Sri Rangam in the presence of many great devotees and Vishnu-Chitta.

Since then Goda is worshipped in every Sri Vaishnava temple and household. The blessed Vishnu-Chitta returned to Sri Villiputtur along with others. It is said that Vishnu-Chitta left the planet very soon unable to bear the pangs of separation from his loving daughter and his intense desire to attain the Lord's lotus feet.

Vishnu-Chitta composed 473 hymns in his PeriAzhwar-Thirumozhi, and the works of all the other Azhwars are included only after his works in the Divya-Prabandam. The hymns compiled by Vishnu-Chitta seem to suggest that he was in love with the Lord as His parent like mother Yashoda (i.e. Vatsalya Bhava).

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Godha Praneshwara – One who is the lord and beloved master of Goddess Godha (Andal)."

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Holy Name 54: Krishna

Mantra: Om Krishnaya namah

Meaning – One who is Lord Krishna

Pastime – Sri Venkata Bhatta was a Vaishnava Brahmana and an inhabitant of Sri Rangam. He belonged to the Disciplic succession of Sri Ramanujacarya. Sri Rangam is one of the places of pilgrimage in the province of Tamil Nadu. The inhabitants of that province do not retain the name Venkata. It is therefore supposed that Venkata Bhatta did not belong to that province, although he may have been residing there for a very long time. Venkata Bhatta was in a branch of the Ramanuja Sampradaya known as Vadagalai. He had a brother in the Ramanuja Sampradaya known as Sripada Prabodhananda Sarasvati. The son of Venkata Bhatta was later known in the Gaudiya Sampradaya as Gopala Bhatta Goswami, and he established the Radha Ramana temple in Vrndavana. When

Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu visited Sri Rangam during his southern India Yatra, Sri Venkata Bhatta then invited Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to his home with great respect and washed the Lord's feet, and all the members of his family drank the water. After offering lunch to the Lord, Sri Venkata Bhatta submitted that the period of Caturmasya (4 months of rainy season) had already arrived, and please be merciful to me and stay at my house during Caturmasya. Speak about Lord Krishna's pastimes and kindly deliver me by Your mercy. Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu agreed and remained at the house of Venkata Bhatta for four continuous months. The Lord passed His days in great happiness, enjoying the transcendental mellowness of discussing Lord Krishna's pastimes.

While there in Sri Rangam, Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took His bath in the river Kaveri and visited the temple of Lord Sri Ranganatha. Every day the Lord also danced in ecstasy. The beauty of Lord Chaitanya's body and His ecstatic love of God was witnessed by everyone. Many people used to come to see Him, and as soon as they saw Him, all their unhappiness and distress vanished. Many hundreds of thousands of people from various countries came to see the Lord, and after seeing Him they all chanted the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra. Indeed, they did not chant anything but the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra and all of them became Lord Krishna's devotees. Thus the general populace was astonished. Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu remained at the house of Venkata Bhatta and constantly talked with him about Lord Krishna. In this way, He was very happy.

Being a Vaishnava in the Ramanuja Sampradaya, Sri Venkata Bhatta worshiped the Deities of Lakshmi and Narayana. Seeing his pure devotion, Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was very satisfied. Constantly associating with each other, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Venkata Bhatta gradually developed a friendly relationship. Indeed, sometimes they laughed and joked together. Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu told Sri Venkata Bhatta, "Your worshipable goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, always remains on the chest of Narayana (Ranganatha), and she is certainly the most chaste woman in the creation. However, My Lord is Lord Sri Krishna, a cowherd boy who is engaged in tending cows. Why is it that Lakshmi, being such a chaste wife, wants to associate with My Lord? Just to associate with Krishna, Laksmi abandoned all transcendental happiness in Vaikunta and for a long time accepted vows and regulative principles and performed unlimited austerities.

And Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu quoted from Srimad Bhagavatam, "Oh Lord, we do not know how the serpent Kaliya attained such an opportunity to be touched by the dust of Your lotus feet. Even the goddess of fortune, for this end, performed austerities for centuries, giving up all other desires and observing austere vows. Indeed, we do not know how the serpent Kaliya got such an opportunity." Sri Venkata Bhatta then said, "Lord Krishna and Lord Narayana are one and the same, but the pastimes of Krishna are more relishable due to their sportive nature. Since Krishna and Narayana are the same personalities, Lakshmi's association with Krishna does not break her vow of chastity. Rather, it was in great fun that the goddess of fortune wanted to associate with Lord Krishna." From this, we can understand that Sri Venkata Bhatta knew the truth.

Sri Venkata Bhatta further continued, "According to transcendental realization, there is no difference between the forms of Narayana and Krishna. Yet in Krishna, there is a special transcendental attraction due to the conjugal mellow, and consequently, He surpasses Narayana. This is the conclusion of transcendental mellows. The goddess of fortune considered that her vow of

chastity would not be damaged by her relationship with Krishna. Rather, by associating with Krishna she could enjoy the benefit of the rasa dance. Mother Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, is also an enjoyer of transcendental bliss; therefore, if she wanted to enjoy herself with Krishna, what fault is there? Why are You joking so about this?"

Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu replied, "I know that there is no fault on the part of the goddess of fortune, but still she could not enter into the rasa dance. We hear this from the revealed scriptures. When Lord Sri Krishna was dancing with the gopis in the rasa-lila, the gopis were embraced around the neck by the Lord's arms. This transcendental favor was never bestowed upon the goddess of fortune or the other consorts in the spiritual world. Nor was such a thing ever imagined by the most beautiful girls in the heavenly planets, girls whose bodily luster and aroma exactly resemble the beauty and fragrance of lotus flowers. And what to speak of worldly women, who may be very, very beautiful according to material estimation? But can you tell Me why the goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, could not enter the rasa dance? The authorities of Vedic knowledge could enter the dance and associate with Krishna.

Having been asked by Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu why the goddess of fortune could not enter into the rasa dance whereas the authorities on Vedic knowledge could, Venkata Bhatta replied, "I cannot enter into the mysteries of this behavior. I am an ordinary human being. Since my intelligence is very limited and I am easily agitated, my mind cannot enter within the deep ocean of the pastimes of the Lord. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself. You know the purport of Your activities, and the person whom You enlighten can also understand Your pastimes."

After hearing the humble words from Sri Venkata Bhatta, Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu replied, "Lord Krishna has a special characteristic: He attracts everyone's heart by the mellow of His personal conjugal love. By following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of the planet known as Vrajaloka or Goloka Vrindavana, one can attain the shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. However, on that planet, the inhabitants do not know that Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There someone may accept Him as a son and sometimes bind Him to a grinding mortar. Someone else may accept Him as an intimate friend and, attaining victory over Him, playfully mount His shoulders. The inhabitants of Vrajabhumi know Krishna as the son of Maharaja Nanda, the king of Vrajabhumi, and they consider that they can have no relationship with the Lord in the rasa of opulence. One who worships the Lord by following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vrajabhumi attains Him on the transcendental planet of Vraja, where He is known as the son of Maharaja Nanda. The inhabitants of Vrajabhumi, or Goloka Vrndavana, know Krishna as the son of Maharaja Nanda. They do not accept Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as people in general do. The Lord is the supreme maintainer of everyone and the chief personality among all personalities. In Vrajabhumi, Krishna is certainly the central point of love, but no one knows Him there as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Rather, a person may know Him as a friend, son, lover, or master. In any case, the center is Krishna. The inhabitants of Vrajabhumi are related to the Lord in servitude, friendship, parental love, and conjugal love. A person engaged in devotional service may accept any one of these transcendental relationships, which are known as mellows. When such a person reaches the perfectional stage, he returns home, back to Krishna, in his pure spiritual identity.

Then, Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu quoted, “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the son of Mother Yasodha, is accessible to those devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service, but He is not as easily accessible to mental speculators, to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self. The authorities in the Vedic literature who are known as the sruti-ganas worshiped Lord Krishna in the ecstasy of the gopis and followed in their footsteps. The authorities in the Vedic literature who are known as the sruti-ganas desired to enter into Lord Sri Krishna’s rasa dance; therefore, they began to worship the Lord in the ecstasy of the gopis. In the beginning, however, they were unsuccessful. When they could not enter the dance simply by thinking of Krishna in the ecstasy of the gopis, they actually accepted bodies like those of the gopis. They even took birth in Vrajabhumi just like the gopis and consequently became engrossed in the ecstasy of the gopis' love. In this way, they were allowed to enter into the rasa-lila dance of the Lord. The personified authorities on the Vedic hymns acquired bodies like those of the gopis and took birth in Vrajabhumi. In those bodies, they were allowed to enter into the Lord's rasa-lila dance.”

Before this explanation was given by Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Venkata Bhatta thought that Sri Narayana was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thinking in this way, Venkata Bhatta believed that worship of Narayana was the supreme form of worship, superior to all other processes of devotional service, for it was followed by the Sri Vaisnava disciples of Ramanujacarya. Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had understood this misconception of Venkata Bhatta's, and to correct it the Lord talked so much in a joking way.

Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu continued, "My dear Venkata Bhatta, please do not continue doubting. Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this is the conclusion of the Vedic literatures. Lord Narayana, the opulent form of Krishna, attracts the minds of the goddess of fortune and her followers. All these incarnations of Godhead are either plenary portions or parts of the plenary portions of the purusa-avataras. But Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.”

In this way, Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu deflated the pride of Sri Venkata Bhatta, but just to make him happy again, He spoke as follows, "Actually whatever I have said is by way of jest. Now you can hear from Me the conclusion of the scriptures in which every Vaishnava devotee has firm faith, "There is no difference between Lord Krishna and Lord Narayana (Ranganatha), for They are of the same form. Similarly, there is no difference between the Gopis and the goddess of fortune, for they also are of the same form. The goddess of fortune enjoys an association with Krishna through the Gopis. One should not differentiate between the forms of the Lord, for such a conception is offensive. There is no difference between the transcendental forms of the Lord. Different forms are manifested due to the different attachments of different devotees. The Lord is one, but He appears in different forms just to satisfy His devotees.” After saying this, Sri Venkata Bhatta fell before the lotus feet of the Lord, and the Lord, out of His causeless mercy, embraced him. In this way, Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu transformed the entire family of Sri Venkata Bhatta from Sri Ramanuja Vaishnavism to Krishna Bhakti (Sri Gaudiya Vaishnavism).

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Krishna – One who is Lord Krishna.”

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Holy Name 55: Jagannatha

Mantra: Om Jagannathaya namah

Meaning – One who is the lord of the universe

Pastime – While in Melukotte, Ramanujacarya in a dream was told by the Lord that the utsava-murti, which had been stolen by invading Moguls, was in Delhi. Ramanujacarya went there with his disciples, met the sultan who had plundered temples in South India, and requested him to return the deity. The sultan showed him several deities, but Ramanuja did not approve of any of them. He said that his deity was in the harem of the princess. The sultan told Ramanuja that if he wanted his deity, he would have to ask the deity to come to him.

Ramanuja sang a sweet song and called out, “Please come, my dear child.” (“Cheluva” means “dear child.”) The deity came as a beautiful boy and sat on his lap. Ramanuja embraced the divine child with great affection, calling him Sampad-kumara (“Youthful Lord”), and brought Him to Melukote.

The princess, unable to bear separation from the deity, followed Ramanuja. The sultan then sent his army to accompany the princess, but when they couldn’t enter a rival’s kingdom, the princess continued on alone. When she came to Melukote, she was not allowed to enter the temple, being a Muslim, so she decided to spend her life in penance. Hearing that she was not allowed to see the deity, Ramanuja ordered his disciples to allow her to enter the temple. She walked in and merged with the Lord.

Ramanuja installed a deity of the princess, Bibinachchiyar, at the feet of Tiru Cheluva Narayana. Since then every offering made in the temple is done through her.

According to some sources, a Muslim prince called Kuber was madly in love with Bibinachchiyar and he was aspiring to marry her. He used to try and associate with her whenever he could get a chance with the intention of winning her by impressing her. However, Bibinachchiyar, due to all the good work done by her in many births, got attracted to the Lord. As soon as Kuber came to know about Bibinachchiyar’s escape from the military camp he relinquished everything and went in search of Bibinachchiyar. After searching in various parts of the country Kuber finally found Bibinachchiyar in Melkote. As Kuber was much attached to Bibinachchiyar he started to follow in her footsteps. Bibinachchiyar used to worship Lord Sampath Kumara and Kuber used to worship her. Over time Kuber had become a very good devotee of the Lord just by emulating Bibinachchiyar. Kuber became very depressed after Bibinachchiyar left this material world. He could not live in Melkote. He decided to go to Sri Rangam and spend the rest of his life in the service of Lord Ranganatha.

Kuber stayed within the precincts of Lord Sri Ranganatha’s temple in Sri Rangam and used to contemplate the beautiful form of the Lord. He was so focused on contemplating the Lord that he used to forget about his bodily needs. He used to sparsely eat and drink whenever he came out of the samadhi state. Once when Kuber was lost in meditation he heard the voice of Lord Ranganatha stating, “Oh

best among Yavanas go to Puri Kshetra. I myself present there as Jagannatha, the lord of the universe, You will be blessed by my most merciful and beautiful form, Lord Jagannatha, one who redeems even the fallen souls out of His causeless mercy." Lord Ranganatha did this for the benefit of Kuber and also to save him from the caste-conscious Brahmanas in southern India.

Kuber went to Puri and started to spend time contemplating the Lord and he was blessed with the vision of Lord Jagannatha very soon. Kuber was so advanced that he used to see the Supreme Lord in everything he came across and wherever he went. As Kuber was a Muslim by birth he was not allowed into Lord Jagannatha's temple and Lord Jagannatha never deserted Kuber. Once, Kuber prepared rotis and as he did not have anything to eat along with the rotis he went to the nearby shop to get some butter. A stray dog that was sitting close by took Kuber's rotis and was about to consume them. As Kuber returned even before the dog could eat the rotis the dog started running along with the rotis fearing that Kuber might beat it. Kuber started to run behind the dog and began shouting, "Narayana! Please wait! I haven't smeared the butter on the rotis and it will be difficult to eat the rotis dry, take this butter!"

Kuber was a Parama Bhagavata. Therefore, he used to see every being as the personification of the Lord. By the mercy of the Lord and Bibinachchiyar, Kuber attained liberation very soon. Such is the power of association of great devotees irrespective of their caste and other material attributes ascribed to them.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Jagannatha – One who is the lord of the universe," in this case, Supreme Lord, he being the Lord of the entire universe never deprive anyone of his association, and service, etc… by the merely considering their color, caste, creed, etc… he being the lord of the entire universe, accepted the Muslim princess and also Prince Kuber. Further, not to disturb the social setup and also by understanding the devotional mood of Kuber, Lord Ranganatha guided him to the place, where he can progress further by worshipping him.

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Holy Name 56: Jayadratha

Mantra: Om Jayadrathaya namah

Meaning – One who has the glorious chariot, which brings the victory

Pastime – In the beginning, when Lord Brahma performed his penances, appeared is Ranga Vimana. Ranga Vimana is the name given to a special chariot-like conveyance carried by Veda Murtis on their head, having the Deity of Lord Ranganatha inside the Vimana (tower). Wherever this special chariot-like conveyance is present, there always victory is present. During the presence of Ranga Vimana in Satya Loka, the glorious chariot like Vimana brought all victory to Lord Brahma. Later, when it came to the earth in Ayodhya. The glorious chariot like Vimana brought all victory to all the kings of the Solar dynasty. Later, when the glorious chariot like Vimana arrived at Sesha Peetam (Present-day Sri Rangam Region), still, it exhibited the glorious quality of bringing all victory to its worshippers.

Lord Ranganatha arrived from Ayodhya and started to reside along with his Ranga Vimana in Sesha Peetam and the glorious place to obtain the name Sri

Rangam. Several sages and saints worshipped the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha. The Crest jewel of all the saints is Sri Ramanuja, who is an incarnation of Adi Sesha. Being situated in Sri Rangam Sri Ramanuja propagated the glories of Lord Vishnu (Ranganatha) far and wide and due to this his fame began to spread far and wide. There was a great Mayavadi scholar called Yajnamurthy, who was very proud of his knowledge. Yajnamurthy had traveled all over the country and had defeated all the scholars who dared challenge him. His attendants used to carry a cartload of books wherever he went. Having defeated all the scholars in North India and received various titles from different kings, Yajnamurthy had established himself as a great scholar, and people used to consider him to be the personification of knowledge. Some devotees who had gone on a pilgrimage to North India told Yajnamurthy about Ramanuja and how Ramanuja had refuted many mayavadi scholars. They also told Yajnamurthy that even staunch mayavadis like Yadava Prakasha had become disciples of Ramanuja and mayavada was losing ground in South India. Being an ardent follower of Advaita, Yajnamurthy decided to refute Ramanuja and re-establish the supremacy of Advaitism over Vaishnavism.

Yajnamurthy came to Sri Rangam along with his cartload of books. He went to Ramanuja's monastery to challenge Ramanuja for a debate. While refusing to accept Yajnamurthy's challenge, Ramanuja said, "You are a scholar of great repute and victory follows you wherever you go, I do not want to challenge you. Please think that you have defeated me and spare me the trouble of arguing with an undisputed scholar like you."

Yajnamurthy said, "If so, will you accept Advaita as superior to Vaishnavism and stop living in the illusory world?"

Ramanuja smilingly replied, "We always believe this world and the individual souls that are enshrined in different bodies to be real. Therefore, we are not living in the illusory world like the mayavadis, who consider this world to be an illusion."

Yajnamurthy could not digest Ramanuja's reply and started to defend the mayavada philosophy and Ramanuja started to refute Yajnamurthy's claims. Though Ramanuja was not willing to enter into a debate with Yajnamurthy he was drawn into it due to his efforts to defend Vaishnava philosophy, which was frequently attacked by the mayavadis. The argument went on for seventeen days and on the seventeenth day, Yajnamurthy seemed to have an upper hand. After the debate concluded for the day, Ramanuja went back to his monastery with a heavy heart. Ramanuja went to his deities, Lord Devaraja, and His consorts, and prayed to them. Addressing the Lord, Ramanuja said, "My Lord, by their misleading arguments, the mayavadis have shrouded the path to devotion, which is established in the Vaishnava scriptures. Many of my preceptors have attained your mercy and liberation by following Vaishnava philosophy. How long will you continue to keep your children, who are embodied in this material world, away from you by allowing the mayavadis to reign? Please have mercy on your children. Dispel their ignorance by reestablishing the path of devotion." Further, Ramanuja offered his respects to Lord Ranganatha and expressed his feelings.

After having prayed to the Lord, Ramanuja retired for the day and slept. Lord Varadaraja who is also worshipped as Devaraja, appeared in Ramanuja's dream and said, "Yathiraja do not despair. The path of devotion will be established in this world through you."

The following day Ramanuja went to the debate venue with a lot of confidence as the Lord had assured him that Vaishnava philosophy would be re-established in the world. Yajnamurthy was surprised to see Ramanuja's confidence as he thought that he had an upper hand in the debate. This confidence is due to the Lord's special grace upon Sri Ramanuja and also the presence of Ranga Vimana, which will always bring victory to his dependents. So much so that, even before Ramanuja entered the debate venue, Yajnamurthy prostrated before Ramanuja and requested Ramanuja to forgive him. Yajnamurthy said, "Being proud of my knowledge I challenged you, and I have realized that needless arguments will not take me anywhere. People can attain the purpose of this human life only by following the footsteps of great people like you. Please accept me as your disciple."

Ramanuja lifted Yajnamurthy and embraced him and accepted him as a disciple. That is the glory of worshipping the Lord Ranganatha, who is the crest jewel situated in the Ranga Vimana, which is the special chariot-like conveyance carried by Veda Murtis. Not only he, several scholars, who came to Sri Rangam for the debate were defeated by the devotees of Sri Rangam, because of their staunch devotion to the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha, who resides in the glorious chariot-like conveyance (Ranga Vimana).

Being a staunch Mayavadi, Yajnamurthy had removed his sacred thread at the time of accepting the renounced order of life. Immediately after he embraced Vaishnavism and accepted Ramanuja as his guru, Yajnamurthy once again began to wear the sacred thread after performing atonement rituals and austerities to purify him. He started to apply the Vaishnava Urdhvapundras on twelve parts of the body following Ramanuja's guidance. As Yajnamurthy became his disciple immediately after Lord Devaraja told Ramanuja that Vaishnavism would be re-established in this world through him, Ramanuja named Yajnamurthy Devarajamuni. Devarajamuni quickly became a very good devotee and studied Vaishnava philosophy and started to worship the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha, who is situated in the sacred Ranga Vimana. Under the guidance of Ramanuja, Devarajamuni compiled two works called Jnanasara and Prameyasara in Tamil.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Jayadratha – One who has the glorious chariot, which brings the victory," the special chariot is nothing but the Ranga Vimana, which is having the structure of chariot-like conveyance carried by the personification of Vedas. This chariot always brings victory.

Yet another pastime,

Saint Andal was an incarnation of Mother Earth. When Hiranyaksha abducted Mother Earth and threw her into the ocean, Lord took the incarnation of a boar to save her. After saving her and slaying Hiranyaksha, the Lord disclosed some truths to her. Mother earth felt that humans should benefit from these teachings and decided to incarnate as Saint Andal. She was found under a Tulasi plant by Periyazhwar in the month of Aadi under the constellation of Pooram. Periyazhwar rejoiced to see the baby girl and named Her Kodai meaning garland. When she grew a little older, she began to hear about Lord Krishna's pastimes from her father and desired to marry Lord Krishna one day. Every day she used to wear the garlands meant for the Lord and admire herself in the well. Periazhwar didn't

know about this and used to offer the garlands daily to the Lord and the Lord used to enjoy wearing the garlands worn by Kodai.

Once she grew up, Kodai desired to marry Lord Krishna like the Gopis of Vrindavan and decided to follow the Katyayani Ritual that the Gopis had followed to attain Lord Krishna. She modified the ritual by calling it the Pavai Nombu and worshipped Krishna as the main deity instead of Durga. She did this ritual for 30 days in the month of Margazhi. Every day she composed Thiruppavai and sang a verse in praise of Lord Krishna for 30 days leading to a set of 30 verses. She considered Srivilliputtur as Gokulam. The first five verses denote the praise of the Lord and the significance of the rituals. In the next 10 verses from 6 to 15, she wakes up all her friends. The significance is to wake up our 10 Indriyas, i.e., 10 sense organs within us. After that, all the Gopis reach the Bungalow of Nanda Gopa and wake up the gatekeepers, Nanda Gopalan, Yashoda, Balaraman, Nappinnai, and Krishna. Then they request Lord Krishna to come and sit on the throne and listen to their wishes. The final two verses tell the significance of the Tiruppavai and the benefit of reciting the same. After that, she composed more verses in praise of Lord Krishna by requesting him to marry her. Then she sang a set of 11 verses describing the dream of her marriage to her friend. They formed a set of 143 verses known as Nachiyar Thirumozhi.

She followed the footsteps of her father while composing all these verses. When Periazhwar felt that Andal was of marriageable age, he asked her whom she would prefer to marry. Andal stated that she would not marry any human but only God. Periazhwar was initially stunned by this. Then he gave Andal a description of the Gods of all the Divya Desam temples. When Periyazhwar described the beauty of Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam, especially the handsome beauty of the Lord’s large body and eyes, she shook her head out of embarrassment. Lord Ranganatha appeared in the dream of the priests of the Srirangam temple and asked them to invite Andal to Srirangam. Andal was bedecked like a bride and reached Srirangam in the palanquin along with Periazhwar. When the palanquin reached the sanctum of Lord Ranganatha, Andal went forth and became one with the Lord, in this way Lord accepted Andal.

Meanwhile, Periyazhwar, who is an incarnation of Garuda, requested Lord Ranganatha to come to Srivilliputtur and traditionally marry his daughter as described in the Vedic scriptures. For the marriage festivity, Lord Ranganatha was adored as the groom and he was taken by Garuda, who is the chariot of the Lord, swiftly for the marriage. Since Garuda brought Lord Ranganatha to Srivilliputtur with great speed and also Lord’s dear devotee Vishnuchitta (Periyazhwar), who is none other than the incarnation of Garuda, he has been given the same status as that of Lord Rangamannar and stands along with Andal and Rangamannar in the main sanctum of Srivilliputtur. This is a unique honor bestowed on Garuda. Thus, Vishnuchitta became the father-in-law of Lord Ranganatha and thus came to be known as Periazhwar. Thus, Lord became Rangamannar and stayed at Srivilliputtur with Andal.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Jayadratha – One who has the glorious chariot, which brings the victory,” in this case Garuda, who is a glorious chariot of Lord Ranganatha, pleased by Garuda’s potency, speed, and service, in fact, Lord Ranganatha got the hand of Andal in that way got the victory over all other forms of Lord himself by the special and speedy act of Garuda and also whose incarnation, Periazhwar. So, Lord Ranganatha has given a place next to him in the main shrine and also Andal initially was

mesmerized by hearing her father, Vishnuchitta (Periazhwar), speak about the handsome form of Lord Ranganatha's transcendental body, especially Rangannatha's very large and handsome eyes. In every way, Garuda, who is none other than Periazhwar and also the glorious chariot, brought victory to Lord Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 57: Nichulapura Valleesa

Mantra: Om Nichulapura valleesaya namah

Meaning – One who is the Lord of Kamalavalli Thayar of Urayur (Nichulapura)

Pastime – From the heredity of King Dharma Varma Cholan came a King called Nandha Cholan, ruling the Chola Dynasty with Uraiyur as a Capital. He was also an adorn devotee of Lord Ranganatha of Sri Rangam. He ruled his Dynasty prosperously and every citizen there was happy and the Dynasty was prosperous. Only the King has a problem that he doesn't have a child. Lord Vishnu asked Goddess Mahalakshmi to become the child of King Nandha Cholan.

Once when King Nandha Cholan went hunting he heard a child's cry. He went in search of it and at last found a child on the lotus in a pond. He brought the child and named her Kamalavalli as She came from the lotus in the pond. When the Kamalavalli was grown up, she went to the festival at Sri Rangam and admired the beauty of Lord Ranganatha, and pledged to marry Him. Lord Ranganatha appeared in the dream of King Nandha Cholan and told him that his child is none but the Goddess Mahalakshmi so send her to Sri Rangam and Lord Ranganathar will marry Her. King Nandha Cholan was delighted that Goddess Mahalakshmi was his daughter and Lord Ranganatha is going to be his son-in-law. He dressed Kamalavalli as the bridegroom and took Her to Sri Rangam, Lord Ranganatha Temple. When Kamalavalli went near Lord Ranganatha, she vanished and Lord accepted Her. King Nandha Cholan came to Uraiyur and built a temple in memory of the marriage of Lord Ranganatha and her daughter Kamalavalli. Lord Ranganatha in the temple of Uraiyur is called Azhagiya Manavaalan (Beautiful Bride).

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Nichulapura Valleesa – One who is the Lord of Kamalavalli Thayar of Urayur (Nichulapura)."

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Holy Name 58: Nithya mangala dhayaka

Mantra: Om Nithya mangala dhayakaya namah

Meaning – One who always bestows auspiciousness (to his worshippers)

Pastime – Kuresha had made it a habit to visit Lord Ranganatha's temple every day. He used to spend most of the time in the temple chanting the glories and names of the Lord. Kuresha was gradually getting old and endured a lot of hardships after he was blinded by the bigoted Chola King. His steps began to falter due to weakness. Kuresha thought that this body would be useless if it couldn't take him to the Lord's temple. He was thinking, "By the mercy of the Lord I should quit this body before it confines me to bed and prevents me from going to the Lord's temple." Kuresha reached the sanctum of Lord Ranganatha's

temple and stood before the deity visualizing the beautiful form of the Lord on his mental screen. He stood in front of the Lord for a long time and requested the Lord to take him away from this material world before he becomes bedridden. After some time, the Lord directed his priest to tell Kuresha that his desire would be fulfilled very shortly and asked him if he had any unfulfilled desires. Kuresha became very happy when the priest conveyed the Lord's message and requested the Lord to grant liberation to everyone associated with him. The Lord granted his wish and Kuresha returned home happily.

Ramanujacharya came to know about the boon granted by the Lord to Kuresha and became very happy. When people asked him the reason for his happiness Ramanuja said, "I am connected to Kuresha as his guru. Therefore, even I will be liberated after this lifetime." Such was Ramanuja's humility. Ramanuja used to glorify the good qualities in his disciples and never projected himself or acted as superior in any manner. Ramanuja met Kuresha and admonished him for requesting the Lord to liberate him. Ramanuja spent some time with Kuresha before returning to his ashram.

When Kureshan got word from Lord Ranganatha about the liberation from this material entanglement. It was at that moment that a most excellent and poignant prayer ("Thaniyan") in euphonious Sanskrit sprang spontaneously to Kureshan's lips and which even to this day all devout followers of Sri Ramanuja recite in their homes daily and at all times:

yo nithyamachyutha padambuja yugmarukma
vyamohathas thaditharani thrunaya menay
asmad guror bhagavatosya dayaika sindhoho
ramanujasya charanau saranam prapadye

Meaning: I take shelter at the lotus feet of Sri Ramanuja, who out of great attachment for the lotus feet of Lord Achyuta, considers everything else as a blade of grass, who is my Acharya, who is perfect in all divine qualities such as knowledge, devotion, etc., and who is an ocean of mercy.

Exactly four days after the Lord promised to grant Kuresha's prayers, Kuresha quit his body while he was engrossed in contemplating the glories of the Supreme Lord. The devotees were singing the glories of the Lord around him when he quit his body. Kuresha was very dear to everyone and the devotees were filled with sorrow. Kureshan passed away peacefully after a few hours in the presence of his wife Andal and their two young sons Vyasa Bhattar and Parasara Bhattar.

The entire town participated in Kuresha's funeral procession. Kuresha's body was cremated on the banks of the Cauvery amidst the chanting of the holy name and singing of the hymns of the Alwars. The funeral was followed by a month-long obsequies ceremony in which thousands of devotees took part. Spiritual discourses, chanting of holy hymns of the Alwars, the Vedic scriptures, and feasts were organized to pray for the welfare of the departed noble soul. Kuresha was 106 years old when he quit his body and attained liberation. The people of Sri Rangam overcame the sorrow of Kuresha's disappearance with the guidance of Ramanujacharya. All of Srirangam gathered and performed all the due obsequies and honors that one so great a soul as Kureshan richly deserved. Sri Ramanuja has so many disciples but not one like Kureshan.

Ramanuja did not venture out of Sri-Rangam after Kuresha quit his material body. He started to focus more on contemplating the glories of the Supreme Lord and Parasara used to take care of the affairs of the monastery. Ramanuja used to visit Lord Ranganatha's temple every day and spend most of his time in the secluded confines of his ashram meditating on the beautiful form of the Lord. Andhra Purna, who was very fond of Ramanuja, used to take care of all his needs.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Nithya mangala dhayaka – One who always bestows auspiciousness (to his worshippers)," in this case, he bestowed the auspiciousness of attaining his lotus feet in the Spiritual world, Vaikunta, to Kuresha. Further, in the same way, Lord Ranganatha bestowed and bestowed supreme auspiciousness to many of his worshippers.

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Holy Name 59: Gandhasthambhadwayollasi Gayathri Roopa Mandapa

Mantra: Om Gandhasthambhadwayollasi Gayathri roopa mandapaya namah

Meaning – One who has the Gayatri Mandapa, which shines with two fragrant pillars

Pastime – King Dharmavarma, who with his penances brought Lord Ranganatha to Sri Rangam, after the arrival of Lordship, built the first compound of the temple along with temple towers, multi-pillared mandapams, etc… Along with several important aspects of the temple, he built the inner shrine of Lord Ranganatha, which is known as Gayatri Mantapam, which contains 24 pillars, because Gayatri Mantra as 24 syllables. Among the 24 pillars, the two prominent pillars just in front of Lord Ranganatha are known as Kalyana or Tirumana Thoon (pillar), which literally means the pillars which bring all-auspiciousness to the devotees. These two pillars have been praised by Kulasekara Azhvar.

In that Gayatri Mandapam, all the important services to Lord Ranganatha occur, great acharyas and kings use the place for discussing the glories of Lord Ranganatha in that place.

Once, Koorathalvar went to bed without dinner because he had not obtained any alms that night due to rain, nor was there any food in his house. When his wife, Andal, heard the wind instrument Tiruchinnam being blown to ritually announce the ceremonial consumption of temple offerings (prasadam) by the deity Ranganatha, she is said to have wondered if it was proper for the deity to partake of lavish food when his devotee (Koorathalvar) had gone to bed hungry. Ranganatha heard her thoughts, and dispatched his devotee, Uttamanambi, to prepare some food and take it to Koorathalvar. The theologian shared the food with his wife, and due to having consumed blessed food, Andal shortly gave birth to two sons, Sreeramapillai and Bhattar. Bhattar was offered the additional name Parasara by Ramanuja, after the great sage and the author of the Vishnu Purana.

Sri Parasara Bhatta, the biological son of Sri Kurathazhwar, appeared due to Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Ranga Nayaki, that's why Sri Parasara Bhatta is supposed to have been brought up by Sri Ranganatha and Sri Ranganayaki. Sri Parasara Bhatta was made to sleep in a "dhuli" a cloth cradle tied to the twin "Thirumana Thoon" huge pillars within the sanctum sanctorum. Sri Ranganayaki

used to take him unto Her lap. Sri Ranganatha was piqued by the fact that Bhatta was always in praise of Sri Ranganayaki, once put on feminine attire resembling Sri Ranganayaki and asked for his opinion. Bhatta gave conditional approval, ending with a “but…” Our Lord was eager to get to the bottom of the “but…” and got the fearless reply that howsoever lovely He looked, He could never get the soft look of compassion, kindness, and gentleness in His eyes like Sri Ranganayaki. This is enacted every year and Azhagiya Manavalan is decorated as a Young woman. Known as Nachiar Thirukolam. Sri Parasara Bhattar believed in the co-divinity of Lakshmi Narayana, calling them 'Mother' and 'Father' and stating that their relationship was similar to that of the sun and sunlight. And he himself used to treat them as his father and mother, so much so that, Lord Ranganatha orders his servants that if any time the child Sri Parasara Bhattar asks for any food before it is offered to him (Lord Ranganatha), they should just give it to Sri Parasara Bhattar and he (Lord Ranganatha) will take the remanents.

The Gayathri mandapam has 24 pillars, each representing a letter of the Gayatri mantra. The two pillars near the sanctum sanctorum are named Kalyana or Tirumana Thoon. Sri Parasara Bhattar used to play in Gayatri mandapam and Thirumana Thoon. Further, the symbolic meaning is that the essence of chanting the Gayatri Mantra is Lord Vishnu, similarly, the essence of Sri Rangam temple is Lord Ranganatha, who stays in the Gayatri mandapam built by his dear devotee, King Dharmavarma. That’s why Lord Ranganatha is known as “Gandhasthambhadwayollasi Gayathri Roopa Mandapa – One who has the Gayatri Mandapa, which shines with two fragrant pillars.”

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Holy Name 60: Bruthya varga saranya

Mantra: Om Bruthya varga saranyaya namah

Meaning – One who is the protector of his dear servants or surrendered people

Pastime – Kuresha, the great devotee and associate of Sri Ramanuja from his Grihasta Ashram, and his wife reached Sri Rangam. Ramanuja got to know about their arrival and brought them to Matha. Ramanuja initiated Kuresha and his wife and arranged for a separate quarter for their stay in Sri-Rangam.

In Sri Rangam, Kuresha started to live by begging. Kuresha was blessed with a very sharp memory and could memorize anything with just one reading. He started to spend his time chanting the holy names of the Lord, studying and discussing scriptures under Ramanuja, and serving Lord Ranganatha in every possible way. Thus, Kuresha started to spend his life happily in the service of the Lord and his wife started to spend her time in the service of her husband after becoming the disciples of Ramanuja.

Being a very rich man, Kuresha had given away all his belongings to the poor and used to maintain his family by begging. Shedding all his anxieties about possessing things and with dispassion, he started spending his time contemplating the Maha-mantra that was revealed to him by his guru, Ramanuja, and singing the glories of the Lord. Once it started to rain very heavily and due to a cyclonic storm the rain did not subside for the entire day. Kuresha was so engrossed in the contemplation of the Lord that he did not even realize that he was hungry but, his wife, Andal, was concerned about him. The sounds of the

temple bells started getting louder as the priests began to offer food to the Lord. Hearing the sound of the temple bells, Andal, who was very devoted to her husband, mentally addressed the Lord and said, “You are relishing the varieties of food that are being offered to You unmindful of Your devotee going to bed without eating anything. I too would have ignored him if he were not my husband.”

After some time the couple could hear the sounds of drums and other musical instruments and the sound started getting louder and louder. A group of people was coming in a procession at a distance and the group stopped near Kuresha’s house. The chief priest of Lord Ranganatha’s temple entered Kuresha’s house carrying something in a cane basket on his head. Kuresha was surprised to see the chief priest at his house and got up to receive him. The chief priest handed over the cane basket and said, “Please accept this Maha-prasadam, which was offered to Lord Ranganatha. The Lord directed me to give the prasadam to you.”

Kuresha was surprised and accepted the prasadam. The chief priest left after exchanging pleasantries with Kuresha and his wife. Kuresha asked his wife if she had asked the Lord for anything. Andal was afraid of telling Kuresha that she had sarcastically remarked that the Lord was relishing a feast when His humble devotee was starving. Andal told her husband that she silently prayed to the Lord as she could not see her husband, who was once feeding hundreds of people, going to bed hungry. Kuresha said, “I was wondering as to why the Lord was binding us with these luxuries once again when we had relinquished them long back. He was only fulfilling your desire. Please don’t ask for anything as He is everything to us.”

Andal felt sorry for having offended her husband by making an unwarranted remark about the Lord and felt happy that the all-merciful Lord had listened to her prayers even when she had prayed to Him sarcastically. She took an oath not to seek anything from the Lord in the future. Kuresha and his wife honored the prasadam and chanted Shatari-sukta, a work that is compiled to glorify Nammalwar, the entire night to ensure that the cravings for material pleasures do not afflict them once again. Exactly ten months after the incident, Andal gave birth to twins making Kuresha, Ramanuja, and all the other disciples very happy. Ramanuja named the two sons of Kuresha Parashara Bhattar and Veda Vyasa Bhattar. Thus, he fulfilled the third promise that he had made to Yamunacharya. Both Parashara and Veda Vyasa were very bright and excelled in the others in their studies. Ramanuja personally initiated both of them at the right time by branding the symbols of discus and conch on their shoulders, revealing the three sacred Vaishnava Mantras, and performing the other rituals related to their initiation.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Bruthya varga saranya – One who is the protector of his dear servants or surrendered people.”

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Holy Name 61: Balabhadra Prasadaka

Mantra: Om Balabhadra prasadakaya namah

Meaning – One who bestowed his mercy upon Balabhadra (Lord Balarama)

Pastime – Lord Balarama did not participate in the fratricidal war in Kurukshetra, because this is the war between the brothers and also in the family. Under that pretext, he went on a pilgrimage and visited many sacred places in India. Lord Balarama took permission from the Brahmanas assembled at Naimisharanya and, accompanied by other Brahmanas, went to the banks of the River Kausiki. After taking His bath in this holy place, He proceeded toward River Sarayu, the holy abode of Ayodhya, and visited the source of the river. Traveling on the banks of the Sarayu River, He gradually reached Prayaga, where there is a confluence of three rivers — the Ganges, Yamuna, and Sarasvati. Here also He took His bath, and then He worshiped in the local temples of the demigods and, as enjoined in the Vedic literature, offered oblations to the forefathers and sages. He gradually reached the ashrama of the sage Pulaha and from there went to the rivers Gandaki and Gomati. After this, He took His bath in the river Vipasha and Sona River. (The Sona River is still flowing as one of the big rivers in Bihar.) He continued His journey and reached the city of Gaya, where there is a celebrated Vishnu temple. According to the advice of His father, Vasudeva, He offered oblations to the forefathers in this Vishnu temple. From here He traveled to the delta of the Ganges, where the sacred river Ganges mixes with the Bay of Bengal. This sacred place is called Gangasagara, and at the end of January every year there is still a great assembly of saintly persons and pious men, just as there is an assembly of saintly persons in Prayaga every year called the Magha-mela fair.

After finishing His bathing and ritualistic ceremonies at Gangasagara, Lord Balarama proceeded towards the mountain, Mahendra Parvata, where He met Parashurama, an incarnation of Lord Krishna, and offered Him respect by bowing down before Him. After this Lord Balarama turned towards southern India and visited the banks of the River Godavari. After taking His bath in the River Godavari and performing the necessary ritualistic ceremonies, He gradually visited the other rivers — the Vena, Pampa, and Bhimarathi. Then, Lord Balarama gradually proceeded to Sailapura, a pilgrimage city in the province of Maharashtra.

Lord Balarama then proceeded towards Dravida-desa and visited the temple of Balaji in Venkatachala. Then He proceeded towards Vishnukanchi and also visited Shivakanchi. Lord Balarama took His bath in the River Kaveri; and then reached Rangakshetra, the temple of Ranganatha. Then, Lord Balarama visited Madurai, commonly known as the Mathura of southern India. After visiting this place, He went towards Setubandha, the place where Lord Ramachandra constructed the stone bridge from India to Sri Lanka (Ceylon). In this particularly holy place, Lord Balarama distributed ten thousand cows to the local brahmana priests. Lord Balarama then proceeded towards the Kritamala and Tamraparni rivers. These two rivers are celebrated as sacred, and Lord Balarama bathed in them both. He then proceeded towards Malaya Hill. This hill is very great, and it is said to be one of seven peaks called the Malaya Hills. The great sage Agastya used to live there, and Lord Balarama visited him and offered His respects by bowing down before him.

After taking the blessings of sage Agastya, Lord Balarama, with the sage’s permission, proceeded towards the Indian Ocean. At the point of the cape (known as Cape Comorin) is a big temple of the goddess Durga, who is known there as Kanyakumari. From there, Lord Balarama went on to visit the pilgrimage city known as Phalguna-tirtha, which is on the shore of the Indian Ocean and Panchapsarasa. From Cape Comorin, Lord Balarama turned towards Kerala. After

visiting this place, He came to Gokarna-tirtha, where Lord Shiva is constantly worshiped. Balarama then visited the temple of Aryadevi, which is completely surrounded by water. From that island, He went on to a place known as Surparaka. After this, He bathed in the rivers known as Tapi, Payosni, and Nirvindhya, and then He came to the forest known as Dandakaranya. Lord Balarama next came to the bank of the River Narmada, the biggest river in central India. On the banks of this sacred Narmada is a pilgrimage spot known as Mahismati-puri. After bathing there according to regulative principles, Lord Balarama returned to Prabhasa-tirtha, from where He had begun His journey.

Balarama is none other than Adi-sesha in his original form, he appeared as Lakshmana during Treta Yuga to serve Lord Rama, appeared as Balarama to serve Lord Krishna in Dvapara Yuga, and at last in Kali-yuga to serve Lord Ranganatha and other deities. As we see, during the course of the journey, he arrived at Sri Rangam (which was also known as Sesha-peetam), where he took his dip in River Kaveri and had the darshan of Lord Ranganatha. Further his visit to various holy places in Dravida Desha (South India) like Kanchi, Madurai, Setubandha, etc… influenced him. Especially he was mesmerized by the darshan of Lord Ranganatha, whom he served in his previous incarnation as Lakshmana. As we know, Lord Ranganatha is the deity of the Solar Dynasty and was worshipped by the Kings of Ayodhya till Lord Ramachandra and Lakshmana, later Lord Rama gave the deity to his devotee Vibeeshana and Lord Ranganatha finally arrived at Sri Rangam (Sesha-peetam). After this, Lord Rama and Lakshmana completed their pastimes and later they appeared as Lord Krishna and Balarama respectively. That's how, during his pilgrimage, Balarama, who is none other than Lakshmana, saw the deity, which he himself worshipped in Ayodhya in his previous incarnation, offered his heartfelt prayers expressing his desire to worship the Lordship, Lord Ranganatha, who is the heart and soul of Lakshmana, sanctioned the wish of his dear Balarama that, he (Balarama) will appear in Dravida-desha in his next incarnation in Kali-yuga, and to his heart content, he will worship him (Lord Ranganatha) deity at Sri Rangam and also other holy places like Kanchi, Madurai, Thirunarayanapuram, etc… and also he will be a pioneer in re-establishing the worshipping procedure for all the deities. He was very much pleased by the blessings of Lord Ranganatha and continued his journey.

Later, Balarama appeared as Sri Ramanuja in Kali-yuga, and became the in-charge of the entire Srivaishnava clan, he traveled across the country and served all the deities, by making his base as Sri Rangam. His entire life he dedicated himself to the service of Lord Ranganatha, whom he worshipped as Lakshmana, Balarama, and Sri Ramanuja. Further, Lord Ranganatha was eternally served by Adi-sesha, who is his serpent bed.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Balabhadra Prasadaka – One who bestowed his mercy upon Balabhadra (Lord Balarama)."

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Holy Name 62: Veda Srunga vimanastha

Mantra: Om Veda Srunga vimanasthaya namah

Meaning – One who has a Vimana (tower of Lord Ranagantha's shrine), which represents the Vedas

Pastime – When Lord Brahma performed his penances, appeared is Ranga Vimana. Ranga Vimana is the name given to a special chariot-like conveyance carried by Veda Murtis on their head, having the Deity of Lord Ranganatha inside the Vimana (tower). Later, this Ranga Vimana, which represents the Vedas became the seat of complete knowledge, because of Lord Ranganatha, who is the personification of the Vedas, presence. That's why, Sri Rangam became the seat of knowledge and all the great scholars across the country wish to visit Sri Rangam and prove their scholarliness. This was made possible by the Acharyas, who used to adore the pontifical position of the Sri Rangam. Among them, the crown jewel was Sri Ramanuja. Being the adherent devotee of Sri Ranganatha at Sri Rangam, Sri Ramanuja worships the Lord, who stays in the Ranga Vimana, which represents the Vedas, use to travel and defeat all the great scholars, who use to propagate the false philosophy.

Ramanuja's fame began to spread far and wide. He showed the world that, Supreme Lord is not impersonal, he is a person, and the Supreme Lord is present in Sri Rangam under the Ranga Vimana. The proof is, that Ranga Vimana is carried by all the personifications of Vedas (Veda Murtis).

Sri Ramanuja promised to fulfill three final desires of his Guru Yamunacharya, one of them is to write the commentary (Vaishnava Commentary) on the Vedanta-sutras (Brahma-sutras of Vyasadeva) and by which establish the Sri Vaishnavism as the authorized Sampradaya. After accepting Sannyasa and also establishing Vaishnavism in Sri Rangam. As the days passed by, Ramanuja was becoming desperate to fulfill his promise to Yamunacharya and resolved to write a commentary to Brahma-sutras following the Vishista-Advaita philosophy at the earliest. As the original copy of the Brahma-sutras was not available in south India, Ramanuja undertook a journey to Sharada pitham in Kashmir along with Kuresha after ascertaining that a copy of the text was preserved there to procure the original text. As Ramanuja had successfully refuted the Mayavada philosophy, his name had spread all over the country and the ardent Mayavadis had a grudge against him. The Mayavadi scholars challenged Ramanuja and entered into a debate wherever he went. Though the debates delayed their journey, they helped Ramanuja in reviving the bhakti movement and spreading the message of the Alwars, Nathamuni, and Yamunacharya. Many scholars who challenged Ramanuja became his disciples and many others became his disciples after coming to know about his greatness.

Ramanuja reached Kashmir and went to the king's court. Ramanuja requested the king to give him a copy of the Brahma-sutras. The court scholar was an ardent Mayavadi and had a great influence over the king. The court scholar asked Ramanuja to refute him in a debate if he wanted a copy of Brahma-sutras. Ramanuja accepted the challenge and the debate ensued. The scholar lost in the debate and yet, he decided not to give a copy of Brahma-sutras to Ramanuja to prevent him from refuting Mayavada by writing a commentary on it. Therefore, he convinced the king to tell Ramanuja that the copy of Brahma-sutras that was with them was eaten away by worms and sent him away without giving the text. Following the court scholar's instructions, the king told a lie to Ramanuja and sent him away without giving him the preserved text. Ramanuja became very sad as he did not get a copy of Brahma-sutras and slept near the library that housed the script that night.

Goddess Sarasvati appeared with tears in Ramanuja's dream that night and said, "You have traveled a long distance just to get the copy of Brahma-sutras and to fulfill the promise made to your guru. Your desire might be fulfilled if you can interpret the famous passage, 'tasya nayane yatha kapyasam pundarikame-vamakshini', from Chandogya Upanishad correctly."

Ramanuja saluted Sarasvati and after taking her blessings said, "The term kapyasam can be split as kam-jalam-pibati, which means he who drinks water, i.e., Sun. The root asa is indicative of something that blossoms. Therefore, the entire term can be interpreted as that which has blossomed by the sun. Therefore, the passage should be interpreted as the eyes of the Golden Purusha is as lovely as the lotus that blooms due to the rays of the sun."

Goddess Sarasvati became very happy as soon as she heard Ramanuja's interpretation of the passage from Chandogya Upanishad and stopped crying. Sarasvati handed over the book to Ramanuja and said, "Please leave this place immediately as these people will not allow you to take this copy of Brahma-sutras if they come to know that I have handed over the book to you. You will complete the commentary very soon and your commentary will become popular as Sri-Bhashya. It will be an authoritative guiding light for everyone who aspires to gain spiritual knowledge and for everyone who attempts to write a commentary on the Brahma-sutras in the future."

According to popular belief, Sarasvati started crying after Shankaracharya compared the beauty of the Lord's eyes to the posteriors of the monkey while interpreting the said passage and she stopped crying after listening to Ramanuja's interpretation.

With the blessings of mother Sarasvati, Ramanuja, and his disciple, Kuresha, left for Sri-Rangam in the middle of the night carrying a copy of Brahma-sutras along with them. After a couple of days, the king's men started rearranging the books that were written on palm leaves after checking if they were infested with worms. To their astonishment, they could not find a copy of Brahma-sutras, which is believed to be compiled by Sage Veda-Vyasa. They brought this to the notice of the king and the court scholars. Everyone in the king's court was shocked. After holding some deliberations with the scholars, the king thought that the scholars who had come from South India might have stolen the copy of Brahma-sutras. The king sent courtiers in all directions to trace Ramanuja and Kuresha and to bring the text back to the library.

One of the teams sent by the king found Ramanuja and Kuresha and inquired about the book from them. The king's men snatched the book from Ramanuja after finding it in his possession and went back to hand it over to the king. Ramanuja was disappointed and started to lament over losing the book. Kuresha said, "Sir you need not worry about the book as I have completely memorized it. I used to study and memorize the text after you went to sleep every night. I know the entire text by heart and I will write it down immediately to ensure that I do not forget anything."

Ramanuja became very happy as he trusted Kuresha's memory. Kuresha was blessed with the ability to remember even the most complex Vedic texts just by listening to them or reading them once. Ramanuja hugged Kuresha and directed him to write down the text immediately. Ramanuja and Kuresha resumed their journey after Kuresha finished writing the text of Brahma-sutras on the palm

leaves and compiled it in book form. Ramanuja reached Sri-Rangam and the entire town gathered at his monastery to welcome him. Addressing the devotees, Ramanuja said, “if we have a copy of Brahma-sutras with us it is due to Kuresha. If he had not memorized the text of Brahma-sutras before the king’s men snatched the book from us, I might not have got an opportunity to write a commentary on the sutras. I might have failed to fulfill my promise to Yamunacharya! I will have to refute the Mayavadis, who say that knowing the meaning of texts like aham brahmasmi and tat tvam asi is sufficient to attain liberation and claim that the Supreme Brahman is devoid of any qualities, and those who consider dry ritualism, austerity, charity, and Karma as the only means to liberation. I will establish the philosophy propounded by the alwars, Nathamuni and Yamunacharya while writing the commentary besides establishing Bhakti, unconditional love, meditation, and worship as the only means to attain the Lord and liberation as advocated by the scriptures.”

Looking towards Kuresha, who was sitting by his side, Ramanuja said, “Kuresha will help me in writing the commentary by being my scribe. As Kuresha knows most of the Vedic texts by heart he will also correct me if I go wrong by not writing the passages that he thinks are wrong and bring them to my notice for my reconsideration.”

In Sri Rangam, Sri Ramanuja started to write the commentary with the help of his disciple, Kuresha. Their work was going on smoothly till Ramanuja had some doubts about the nature of the individual soul while refuting the Mayavadis description, which says that there is only one soul and its essential nature is the ability to know. Ramanuja sent Kuresha to his guru, Ghostipurna, to get the doubts clarified. When Kuresha informed about Ramanuja’s doubts about Ghostipurna, Ghostipurna said, “Remind him about Nammalwar’s hymn in which he says that the soul is a slave of the Lord. Let him always remember the fact that dependence on the Lord precedes every other quality including jnatrutva, the ability to know, of the soul.” Ramanuja resumed writing his commentary after receiving the clarification from Ghostipurna.

Once while dictating his commentary on one particular aphorism of Brahma-sutra, which describes the nature of the soul, Ramanuja said, “The soul is nitya (eternal) and jnata (one who knows). Therefore, the soul has cognition alone as its distinct attribute.”

As the interpretation given by Ramanuja was similar to the interpretations given by some other schools of philosophy and was not following Yamunacharya’s teachings, Kuresha stopped writing. Though Ramanuja repeatedly asked Kuresha to write whatever he dictated, Kuresha did not oblige. Ramanuja became very angry with Kuresha. Ramanuja got up and kicked Kuresha and said, “Why don’t you write the commentary by yourself if you know things better than me,” and walked away. After some time, Ramanuja realized his mistake and came back. Kuresha had not moved from there and was waiting for Ramanuja to resume his dictation. Ramanuja apologized to Kuresha and thanked Kuresha for correcting him. Ramanuja said, “If we accept the individual soul as the doer and knower it can also mean that the soul is independent and enjoys on its own and has a body. A soul cannot be independent of the Lord as the Lord pervades everything and the individual souls live in Him. Therefore, the souls are dependant on the Supreme Lord and they are his property.”

A scholar who was witnessing everything went to Kuresha after Ramanuja left and said, “Did you not feel bad when Ramanuja kicked you? Why don’t you leave him and go away?”

Kuresha said, “As a disciple, I am his property. Being an ideal guru he has every right to treat me as he wants and I do not have the right to alienate him.”

Kuresha resumed writing and, very soon, Ramanuja completed his commentary on Brahma-sutras and named it Sri-Bhashya as instructed by Goddess Sarasvati. Sri-Bhashya is accepted as one of the most authoritative commentaries on Brahma-sutras by all schools of Indian philosophy. Any study of Indian philosophy would be incomplete without a careful analysis of Sri-Bhashya as its influence can be seen in all the commentaries written on Brahma-sutras after Ramanuja.

In this way, Sri Ramanuja establishes the conclusion of Vedas in the form of commenting on the Vedanta Sutra at the abode of Lord Ranganatha, who is reclining in the Ranga Vimana, which is the representation of Vedas, “Veda Srunga vimanastha – One who has a Vimana (tower of Lord Ranagantha’s shrine), which represents the Vedas,” in this case, Lord Ranganatha, who is the crest jewel or essence of Ranga Vimana, which is represented as Vedas, similarly Vedanta-sutras are the essence of Vedas. By being in Sri Rangam, especially under the shelter of Sri Rangam Vimana, which represents Vedas. Sri Ramanuja completes his commentary on Vedanta-sutras, which is the essence of all the Vedas. This is possible by the influence of Lord Ranganatha and his abode (Ranga Vimana), which made Sri Ramanuja complete his work of Sri Bhasyam (commentary on Vedanta-Sutras). By this supremacy of Lord Ranganatha, who is the Supreme Lord, was established, because until then only the Mayavada commentary of Shankaracharya was there, there was no Vaishnava commentary existed. This was made possible by the mercy of Lord Sri Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 63: Vyagrasura Nishoodhana

Mantra: Om Vyagrasura nishoodhanaya namah

Meaning – One who killed the demon named Vyagrasura

Pastime – Once lived a demon named Vyagrasura, who was actually a pious person but due to some offense, he was cursed to become Tiger with a demon mentality. In some cases, it is mentioned that Vyagrasura is the demon, who assumed the form of a Tiger to create a disturbance. In any case, Vyagrasura in the form of a tiger used to create a great disturbance to the sages, who use to mediate in the forest. Many saints and sages were killed and harassed by a cruel demon. During then once the Vyagrasura went to disturb the saints and sages in the Neelavana forest, who are all mediating with Lord Narayana. Lord Narayana arrived there and killed the demon Vyagrasura and saved the saints and sages. Being killed by Supreme Lord Narayana, even Vyagrasura got some benefits and attained progress in his life.

Many thousands of years later, in a solar dynasty, the Lord Himself appeared in the form of Sri Ramachandra. His father Dasharatha, king of Ayodhya, once conducted the Ashwamedha-yajna (horse sacrifice), to which all earthly kings were invited. Among them was the righteous king Dharmavarma of Chola Deshi.

The sacrifice took place in the place where Iksvaku had established Ranga Vimana many thousands of years ago, and the Dharma Varma was fortunate enough to see Lord Ranganatha personally. Conquered by His beauty, Dharmavarma thought, “Iksvaku was an ascetic, and the Lord came to him, and with Him prosperity, and peace, and the way to liberation.” Determined, the king wished to summon Ranganatha to his kingdom and with this return to his lands. There, on the shore of Lake Chandra Pushkarini, he began to subject himself to severe penances for Ranganatha to come.

Nearby, in the forest ashram, lived hermit sages. Hearing of the king's asceticism, they came to him and said, "O king! Not far from here are the ruins of an ancient city destroyed by the wrath of Lord Shiva. To the north of it is an ashram called Satyadharma. It belongs to the sage Hiranyakeshi, a disciple of Pulastia Muni. Not far from it is the holy forest called Nilawan, where Lord Narayana killed the demon Vyagrasura. Once we were all guests in this ashram and the Lord Himself came to us, attracted by the devotion of Muni Dalbhya. Muni Dalbhya received the Lord with great honors, and we offered prayers. Lord Narayana in return promised us that for the sake of the whole world, he would soon come to the shores of the Kaveri.”

Having told the king this story, the sages persuaded him not to subject himself to such severe austerity, but to return to his capital and rule the kingdom of Chola in accordance with the laws of dharma. Dharmavarma listened to their advice and returned to his capital, Nichula-puri (Uraiyur), located on the southern bank of the Kaveri River.

As mentioned in this incident, Supreme Lord Narayana who arrived for the protection of saints and sages in Neelavana from Vyagrasura, the same Lord Narayana as per his words arrived at the shores of Kaveri as Lord Ranganatha, that’s why Lord Ranganatha is known as “Vyagrasura Nishoodhana – One who killed the demon named Vyagrasura.”

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Holy Name 64: Garudanantha Senesa Gaja Vakthradhi Sevitha

Mantra: Om Garudanantha senesa gaja vakthradhi sevithaya namah

Meaning – One who is the master of the army consisting of Garuda, Adhisesha, Vishvaksena, and other commanders like Kumudaksha, who are having an elephant face, and also served and worshipped by them

Pastime – Lord Ranganatha, the predominating deity of Sri Rangam, arrives at the Krupa Samudram, the present-day Thirusirupuliyur, when he was called by Sage Vyagrapada and Sage Patanjali when they missed their way to Sri Rangam and ended up in Krupa Samudram. Lord Ranganatha gave darshan to them as he is in Sri Rangam, but, in a smaller size. That’s why the special feature of Thirusirupuliyur temple is that this is one of the only two Divya Desams where the deity of Ranganatha is in Sayana Kolam (sleeping posture) facing the Southern direction, the other being Srirangam Ranganathaswamy temple. So this place is equal to Sri Rangam by every means because the same Supreme Lord Ranganatha is situated in Thirusirupuliyur.

Supreme Lord Ranganatha always has many associates, like Garuda being his vehicle, Adisesha being his bed, etc… everyone's service is as important as others. Once, Garuda (the bird carrier of Lord Ranganatha) and Adishesha (the snake on whom Ranganatha reclines in his abode) got into an argument as to who was more powerful and devoted to their lord. They approached Lord Ranganatha himself for the answer, and finding Garuda, a little arrogant, Ranganatha went in favor of Adisesha. Worried that Garuda might be angered at this, Adishesha sought the protection of Ranganatha, upon which Ranganatha asked him to roll himself and hide under him. As a result of this anger, Garuda, the eagle vehicle of Vishnu, does not fly over Thirusirupuliyur's place. There is another legend that Adishesha after winning the argument and since snakes have sworn enemies with eagles, Adishesha as per the instruction of Lord Ranganatha, hid under the waters of the temple tank. That's why, there is a separate shrine for Adhiseshan that is present near the pushkarani (temple pond) - known as Ananthalwar Temple. Apart from this, Lord Ranagnatha (Vishnu) is always accompanied by his other associates like Vishvaksena, Kumudaksha, etc… all of them are part of Lord Ranganatha's (Vishnu's) army, whenever any problem with devotees or demigods or attack by demons, etc… all these associates combine to fight against the opponents and serve the Lord in that way. Apart from this, their only goal is to worship the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord Vishnu and please him in every respect.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Garudanantha Senesa Gaja Vakthradhi Sevitha – One who is the master of the army consisting of Garuda, Adhisesha, Vishvaksena, and other commanders like Kumudaksha, who are having an elephant face, and also served and worshipped by them," in this case even though there are many diversities among the servants of Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu), still, there is a unity among them that is the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu.

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Holy Name 65: Sankarapriya Mahatma

Mantra: Om Sankarapriya Mahatmaaya namah

Meaning – One whose greatness is very dear to Lord Shiva or One whose greatness is explicit, which is loved by Lord Shiva

Pastime – Once after long penances on Lord Shiva, Lord Shiva appeared to Sage Vyaghrapada. Lord Shiva asked Sage Vyaghrapada for his desires, and Sage Vyaghrapada asked for the liberation from material existence and the attainment of Vaikunta, the spiritual world. Lord Shiva, being the Supreme Vaishnava, understood the desire of the Saint Vyaghrapada, he mentions, "Oh Nobel Sage Vyaghrapada, the liberation can only be granted by Supreme Lord Vishnu, who is the Supreme Brahman or Parabrahman. Presently, he dwells in the Sri Rangam as Lord Ranganatha. Please perform your penance at Sri Rangam, requesting Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu) to give him a place in his transcendental abode, Vaikuntha."

Stating this, Lord Shiva disappeared from his vision. Blessed by the guidance of Lord Shiva. Sage Vyaghrapada was joined by Sage Patanjali in his journey toward Sri Rangam. Because of their poor eyesight and also the special intervention of Lord Ranganatha, the sages instead went southward, lost their way, and reached Krupa Samudram, the modern-day Tirusirupuliyur region. Beyond that point, they

are unable to continue their journey, because of poor eye-sight and exhaustion of travel, so in that helpless condition, they prayed to Lord Ranganatha to come from Sri Rangam to give them darshan and grant them moksha (liberation). Understanding the situation of sages and also a special recommendation by Lord Shiva, Supreme Lord Ranganatha, who is Supreme Brahman of Sri Rangam or Parabrahma residing in Sri Rangam, who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, appeared to sages at the place, where the sages stuck and gave them the darshan as Lord Ranganatha, because of poor eyesight, they were not able to see the huge form of Lord Ranganatha, so Lord shrank his size as the small, Bala Shyanam, both sages had the darshan of Lord Ranganatha to their heart contents and by the mercy of Lord Ranganatha, they obtained the Supreme abode, Vaikunta. And also by the special request of the sages, Lord Ranganatha resided there in his Bala Shyanam with the name Lord Krupa Samudram, one who is an ocean of mercy, and place obtained the name, Tirusirupuliyur.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Sankarapriya Mahatma – One whose greatness is very dear to Lord Shiva or One whose greatness is explicit, which is loved by Lord Shiva,” in this case, Lord Shiva explicitly knows the greatness of Lord Ranganatha, so much so that, he immediately guided his dependents (Sage Vyaghrapada and Sage Patanjali) to Sri Rangam to obtain the liberation from material existences by pleasing Lord Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 66: Shyama

Mantra: Om Shyamaya namah

Meaning – One whose bodily hue is blackish or sky-bluish in color

Pastime – Periya Azhwar was born in Srivilliputhur, in a Brahmin family, he was named Vishnuchittar by his parents. He is eighth among all Azhwars. He is an incarnation of Garuda, the bird carrier of Lord Narayana.

Periya Azhwar was very devoted to Lord Narayana, he dedicated himself to the Nandavanam (flower garden), plucking flowers and weaving an excellent garland, enjoying seeing Lord Narayana wearing the garlands. He used to get immense satisfaction and happiness from singing songs in praise of the Lord Narayana. He is married to a devoted lady named Virajai and many years for they there are no Children, but they are happily living by the mercy of the Lord Narayana.

Goddess Bhudevi consort of Lord Narayana expressed her wish to elevate the fallen condition souls, so under the order of Lord Narayana, she appeared at the Tulasivanam (Tulasi Garden) of Periya Azhwar. He took care of the child very nicely and he named the child Andal, he happens to be the foster father of Andal, the only female Azhwar. Later, Lord Ranganatha married Andal and became the son-in-law of Periya Azhwar.

Once after establishing the supremacy of Supreme Lord Narayana, he was taken in procession by the King. To witness this, Lord Narayana along with Goddess, who had come to witness the procession and honors done by the King to the Azhwar, on Garuda Vahana and witness the things from the sky. Periya Azhwar out of parental affection for the Lord was worried that such a beautiful form of

the Lord, which is like a dark cloud, may attract evil eyes. He innocently takes the bell from the elephant's neck on which he was riding. As a symbol of warding off evil, he starts glorifying Lord with his compositions instantly named "Thiru Pallandu",

pallaandu, pallaandu pallayiratthandu palakodi noorayiram

Meaning: Long live for many years, Long live for many years for Hundreds of thousands of years! my Lord!

Out of the Vatsalya Bhava (parental affection) that he had for the Lord, he considered himself to be Mother Yasodha and experienced all the divine pastimes in which the Lord composed all the verses in the glorification of Lordship. Out of the 473 verses which he composed known as "Periazhwar Thirumozhi", about 190 verses are about the divine pastimes of Lord Krishna and also the mood of Mother Yasodha. This Periya Azhwar glorified Lord Ranganatha of Sri Rangam with several verses, especially considering him as Lord Krishna. Once while singing in the mood of Mother Yasodha, Periya Azhwar calls Lord Ranganatha, assuming him as a small child Krishna, to adore his hair with the flowers. He sings (Periazhwar Thirumozhi 182 and 183),

"Oh Dear Child, You go to graze the cattle. Don't you know that you are the finest remedy for all problems? You wander around the forest and your divine dark body becomes dull. You steal milk from the pots of others and people who don't like you see it and laugh at you. Oh, dear child, you are sweeter than honey. Come, I will decorate your hair with shenbaga flowers. If we see dark clouds, our eyes feel as if they had seen your beautiful body, which is dark sky-bluish in color. You are the beloved of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and you rest on the River Kaveri in Sri Rangam. You were born to create all seven worlds. Come to me and I will decorate your hair with jasmine flowers that spread their fragrance everywhere."

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Krishna, is known as "Shyama – One whose bodily hue is blackish or sky-bluish in color."

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Holy Name 67: Santhanu Vandhitha

Mantra: Om Santhanu vandhithaya namah

Meaning – One who is worshipped by King Santhanu

Pastime – There once lived a King named Maharaja Shantanu, the son of Pratipa, who took his birth in the solar dynasty and was considered Naradeva, the manifest representative of the Supreme Lord on earth. His fame and rule extended to all parts of the world. The qualities of self-control, liberality, forgiveness, intelligence, modesty, patience, and power always resided in this exalted emperor. His neck was marked with three lines like a conch shell, and his shoulders were broad. In prowess, He resembled a maddened elephant. Above all these qualities, he was a devoted servant of Lord Vishnu, and therefore he was given the title, King of kings.

That Maharaja Shantanu was once facing the issue that, he not having any family and progeny to continue his legacy. So, he gets to know about the glories of Lord Ranganatha, who was once worshipped by the great of greatest King, Lord Ramachandra, and also the glorious deity gave darshan to Brahma and later arrived on the earthly planet and worshipping this deity in Ayodhya, Lord Rama along with his three brothers, were appeared to Maharaj Dasharatha, so understanding this Maharaj Shantanu arrived at Sri Rangam and worshipped the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha, and also did several services to the Lordship, especially building a mandapam inside the temple known as Shantanu Mantapam. Pleased by the services of Maharaja Shantanu, Lord Ranganatha was pleased that, he will get a son, whose glory will be sung by all the kings and saintly people. Pleased by the special blessings from Lord Ranganatha, Maharaja Shantanu left his capital.

After this, once when Maharaja Shantanu, that bull among men, was wandering in the forest, he came upon a place frequented by the Siddhas and Charanas (a class of heavenly demigods). There he saw an angelic woman who appeared like the goddess of fortune herself. In truth, she was the personification of the river Ganga. She was glancing at the monarch with her youthful longing eyes, and Maharaja Shantanu became attracted to her. He then approached her inquiring, O beautiful woman, are you from the race of the Gandharvas, Apsaras, Yakshas, Nagas, or the human race? As yet I have no queen, and your birth appears divine. Whatever your origin, O celestial beauty, I request you to become my wife.

The beautiful apsara (celestial maiden) then smilingly replied, O King, I shall become your wife and obey your commands, but there are certain conditions. You should not interfere with my actions, whether agreeable or disagreeable. Also, you should never chastise me with harsh words. If you assent to my request, I shall live with you. The King infatuated with love, agreed to her proposals.

Having taken the lovely Ganga for his wife, Maharaja Shantanu passed many years in her association. She satisfied the King with her charm and affection, as well as with her music and dance; and thus the King passed many seasons unconscious of time. While enjoying himself in her company, he conceived eight children by her that were equal in quality to the heavenly gods. However, on the birth of each child, Ganga threw them into the river, exclaiming, This is for your good! The King was not pleased with his wife's conduct, but he dared not speak a chastising word, lest she leaves his company. However, when the eighth child was born, the King could not tolerate the killing of another child and he spoke harshly, Do not kill this child! Why do you kill your own children? O murderess of your sons, the reaction to such sin is very great!

When reproached in these words, the celestial beauty replied, I shall not cast this child into the river, but according to our marriage agreement, our relationship has ended. I am Ganga, the personification of the River Ganga, and I am ever-worshipped by the great sages and common people. My origin is the divine feet of Lord Vishnu. I have lived with you only to accomplish the purpose of the demigods. The eight Vasus were cursed by Vashistha Muni, and thus they have appeared on earth as a reaction to that curse. They have pleaded with me to free them from this bondage immediately after their birth. I have lived with you long enough to fulfill my promise to the Vasus. This last child is destined to live

on earth for some time. His name will be Devavrata, and he shall be famous as a lion among men.

Maharaja Shantanu then inquired his wife, What offense did Astha Vasus commit for which they were born on earth as human beings? Why, also, is this last child destined to live on earth longer than the others? O Ganga, my wife, please clarify this.

Being thus questioned by the King of the earth, Ganga replied to the Monarch, O best of the Bharata race, on Mount Meru, there are many picturesque forests. In one such wooded region lives a renowned sage named Vashistha Muni. He is adept in the practice of austerity and meditation. With the help of his Kamadhenu cow, he performs sacrifices to please the Supreme Being. One day, the eight Vasus headed by Prithu came to that forest. Roaming about with their wives, the Vasus entered the hermitage of Vashistha Muni. At that time they spotted the celestial cow named Nandini. One of the Vasus, whose name was Dyu, then informed his wife, This cow belongs to the eminent sage Vashistha, and it is said that the mortal who drinks the milk of this cow remains unchanged for ten thousand years.' Turning to her husband she replied, I have a very dear friend named Jitavati who is the daughter of the sage Usinara. I wish to take this cow and calf as a present for her.' When repeatedly petitioned by his beautiful wife, Dyu, along with his brothers, abducted the Kamadhenu cow, forgetting who was the actual owner.

That evening, when Vashistha returned to his hermitage, he could not find his Kamadhenu cow or its calf. He began to search the forest, but nowhere could they be found. By his mystic power, obtained by long years of austerity, he then understood that the cow and its calf had been taken away by the Vasus. When the sage's wrath was kindled, he cursed the Vasus, Because the Vasus have stolen my Kamadhenu cow, I curse them to be born on earth as ordinary mortals.' The sage then returned to his practice of ascetic meditation.

When the Vasus heard of Vashistha's curse, they came to his hermitage to pacify him. They praised him with amiable words and offered to return the cow. However, they failed to obtain clemency from the great sage. The great brahmana Vashistha, who is naturally kind to everyone, then compassionately said, This curse is the suitable punishment to rectify your enjoying mentality. You will be freed from it shortly after your earthly birth. However, your brother Dyu, who actually stole my cow, shall have to domicile on earth for a long period of time. Dyu, though living on earth, shall not marry and have children. He will, however, be a man of kingly virtue and will know the essence of the holy scriptures. He will be an obedient servitor to his father, but will have to live without female companionship.'

The Vasus, Ganga continued, then came to me and begged a benediction. They asked that I cast them into the waters of the Ganga immediately upon taking their birth. O best among kings, I have fulfilled their desire, but this last child, Dyu, will have to reside on earth for some time to fulfill the curse of Vashistha Muni. Having related the Vasus' history, Ganga disappeared with the child, and the King returned to his palace with a sorrowful heart. Before disappearing, she promised Shantanu to return his heir.

Years later, Shantanu was roaming on the banks of the Ganga and observed that the water of the river had turned shallow. He saw a young man blocking the

water currents with a dam made up of arrows. Shantanu recognized his son because of the similarities and begged Ganga to return him. Ganga appeared in a youthful form and handed her son to Shantanu as per her promise. The young Devavrata was known as Gangadatta as he was handed over by Ganga.

Devavrata was made the heir-apparent, and the citizens loved him because of his divine background and eligibility. Meanwhile, Shantanu went to the forest and met a fisherwoman named Satyavati, who operated the boats crossing the Yamuna. He fell in love with her and asked for her hand in marriage from her father. However, the fisherman-chief told that he would only agree if Shantanu promised to put the son born to Satyavati as the heir. Shantanu rejected the offer as he had already promised the throne to Devavrata and returned to the palace. He started to avoid any company and spend his time in bed in grief and solitude. Devavrata noticed his father's sorrow and discovered the reason behind it from a minister.

Devavrata immediately rushed to the cottage of the fishermen-chief and begged him for Satyavati, but the fishermen-chief repeated his former condition. For his father's pleasure and happiness, Devavrata ceded his rights to the throne and promised to put the son of Satyavati on the throne of the kingdom. Satyavati's father was not assured as he claimed that disputes were likely to arise between Satyavati's son and Devavrata's children regarding the rights to the throne. To satisfy him, Devavrata took the vow of lifelong Brahmacharya (celibacy), thus denying himself the pleasures of material life.

The celestials showered flowers from heaven and he came to be known as "Bhishma" as he took a terrible vow. With the consent of the fisherman, Bhishma took Satyavati to his father on a chariot and informed him about his vows. A loving father Shantanu gave him the boon of Iccha Mrityu, the control over the time of his death. Shantanu and Satyavati soon married and two children - Chitrangada and Vichitravirya were born.

Throughout Mahabharatha that one personality, Bhisma, is considered a great hero. Even Supreme Lord Krishna glorifies the activities of Bhisma. Bhisma is the personality, who gave Vishnu Sahasaranama (1000 holy names of Lord Vishnu) to the world. That personality Bhisma appeared to Maharaja Shantanu with the blessings of Lord Ranganatha, that’s why, Lord Ranganatha is known as “Santhanu Vandhitha – One who is worshipped by King Santhanu.”

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Holy Name 68: Pancharathrarchitha

Mantra: Om Pancharathrarchithaya namah

Meaning - One whose worship is conducted according to the Pancharathra system

Pastime – Lord Ranganatha’s deity, which is worshipped by Lord Brahma in the process of the Pancharathra system and later on with the same system was worshipped by all the kings of the solar dynasty. Later the deity was moved to Sri Rangam and several sages and kings worshipped the deity in the same manner as the Pancharathra method of worship. Over time the method of worship was minimized by the influence of time, Sage Narada, who learned the system of Pancharathra from Lord Narayana himself, established the proper

system again. This was followed for a long time, during the time of Sri Ramanuja, who accepted the pontiff position of Sri Vaishnava clan and Sri Rangam Temple, who wished to properly establish the Pancharathra system as mentioned in Vedic scripture.

During then, a devotee named Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar was the in-charge of the Sri Rangam temple and he was a major hurdle for Sri Ramanuja in reforming the temple activities. One day he came to Sri Ramanujar and requested him to order a holy man to educate him in sacred ways as he was immersed in sin. When Sri Ramanuja was declared by Lord Ranaganatha as the Spiritual Master (Acharya) and wanted all the activities in the Sri Rangam temple to be organized in the most optimum way, Periya Kovil Nambi (Thiruvarangathu Amruthanar) did not allow easy access to Sri Ramanuja. Sri Ramanuja became frustrated and first decided to remove him from his position. But one day, when Sri Ramanuja was waiting for Lord Ranganatha's procession, Lord Ranganatha appears in his dream and informs him that Periya Kovil Nambi (Thiruvarangathu Amruthanar) is very dear to him since he has served him for so long. Understanding the desire of Lord Ranaganatha, Sri Ramanuja sent word to Kuratazhwan and introduced Periya Kovil Nambi (Thiruvarangathu Amruthanar) by telling, "He is the chief who looks after the day-to-day services of Lord Ranganatha. Without caring for his failings and weaknesses bring him into our fold".

Understanding the mood of Lord Ranganatha, Sri Ramanuja slowly engages Kuratazhwan in teaching real knowledge to Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar. Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar thus becomes purified and becomes very attached to Kuratazhwan and Sri Ramanuja. When his mother passes away, on the 11th day, a ceremony named Ekothishtam is to be performed where a person is assumed to be the body of the deceased person and offered a great feast. At the end of the feast, the consumer of the feast will be asked if he is satisfied and unless he says he is fully satisfied, the ceremony does not become complete. The main aspect of this ceremony is, the one consuming the feast cannot participate in any temple service for one full year on those days. Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar wanting to have an advanced Vaishnavas approaches Sri Ramanuja and asks him to identify such a person. Sri Ramanuja at once asks Kuratazhwan to go to that ceremony and Kuratazhwan happily accepts. Once the feast is over, Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar asks Kuratazhwan if he was satisfied and Kuratazhwan says he will be satisfied only it the temple control is handed over to Sri Ramanuja. Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar at once agrees and hands the temple keys and control to Sri Ramanuja through Kuratazhwan to fulfill his commitment. From this, we can understand the utter dependence of Kuratazhwan on his Acharya Sri Ramanuja. Being a great personality, he need not give up his services for one year. But purely for the pleasure of his Acharya, which is to reform the temple and ensure its proper functioning of the same, he took up the most difficult challenge and fulfilled it without any tinge of hesitation in his mind. Later, Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar becomes less attached to the temple since he handed over all his services. Seeing that, Sri Ramanuja goes to Thiruvaranga Perumal Arayar and requests him to give the Iyarpa recital (Reciting prayers to Lord Ranganatha's pleasure from Azhwars Pashurams (Verses)) right to him. Thiruvaranga Perumal Arayar obliges and gives the same to Sri Ramanuja. Sri Ramanuja then teaches Iyarpa to Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar and asks him to perform the Iyarpa recital in Sri Rangam temple permanently thus engaging him in Lord Ranganatha's services as well.

After getting full in-charge of the Sri Rangam temple, Sri Ramanuja firmly re-establishes the worship of Lord Ranganatha according to the Pancharathra system as mentioned in Vedic scripture, which was continued by his followers. That's why Lord Ranganatha is known as "Pancharathrarchitha - One whose worship is conducted according to the Pancharathra system."

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Holy Name 69: Aneka Bhakta Nethrothsavapradha

Mantra: Om Aneka Bhakta Nethrothsavapradhaya namah

Meaning – One who gives festival-like joy to the eyes of his devotees

Pastime – Once a king named Amba Raja ruled the region known as Thiruvedhimangalam (now Pallikonda, Tamilnadu). He was very victorious and enjoyed all the pleasures in the world as a king. Fed up with the materialistic life, he once realized that the purpose of his birth was only to obtain the Dharshan of Lord Vishnu. He started worshiping Lord Vishnu for years together and was looking forward to his Dharshan. Years passed, but there was no sign of Lord Vishnu appearing to him. He became frustrated and attempted to kill himself. As he was attempting to kill himself, a heavenly voice told him to be patient and continue his prayers that he would soon have the Dharshan of Supreme Lord Vishnu. The king was delighted and continued his services.

Once after preventing Saraswathi, who arrived as River Vegavati, from disturbing the sacrifice of Lord Brahma, Lord Sri Ranganatha returned to Pallikonda and gave Dharshan to Amba Raja. Amba Raja became very much ecstatic by the darshan of Supreme Lord Ranganatha, his happiness or joy there was no bound, he is singing, dancing, laughed, cried, etc… and he wished that the same darshan should be available for all the people. So the king asked for a blessing from Supreme Lord to settle in the same place and give Dharshan to all who visit him. For this, Lord Ranganatha agreed and started to give darshan as Lord Ranganatha, the sleeping posture of the Lord, to all the people who visit him. Then onwards the shrine came to be known as Pallikonda Ranganatha Temple, the place also gets its name Pallikonda, meaning a place where Supreme Lord gives his darshan in a reclining posture, Ranganatha. Because Supreme Lord Ranganatha appeared to him after his pastime of uniting Brahma and Saraswati, the king prayed for a blessing for singles and separated couples visiting here.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is known as "Aneka Bhakta Nethrothsavapradha – One who gives festival-like joy to the eyes of his devotees," the form of Lord Ranganatha is a very pleasing and great joy to demigods, sages, kings, general people, etc… we can understand the same from this incident.

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Holy Name 70: Ksheerambodhi-nilaya

Mantra: Om Ksheerambodhi-nilayaya namah

Meaning – One who resides in the milk-ocean

Pastime – Once Sage Bhrigu wished to visit all the three abodes of principal deities of the universe namely Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu, to test who is the

Supreme Lord. When he visited Brahma and Shiva, he concludes that they were not Supreme, finally, he visits Lord Vishnu at his residence, Ocean of Milk (Ksheerambodhi). The sage did not get his attention of Vishnu and in his anger, he kicked Vishnu in his chest. Goddess Lakshmi, who resides in Vishnu's chest got angered as Vishnu did not show his anger towards the sage. She left Vaikunta and reached earth and Vishnu followed her. Due to this, the entire episode of Srinivasa Kalyana and Lord's appearance on Tirumala (Venkatachala) occurred.

On the other hand, meanwhile, the Sage Bhrigu, who did the grave offense, sought Lord Vishnu's apology and requested Goddess Lakshmi to be born to him as his daughter. Lord Vishnu blessed him with the fulfillment of his desires. Then the Sage Bhrigu appeared as Hema Rishi and performed penance to attain Goddess Lakshmi as his daughter. Lord Vishnu was pleased by the penance and he wished the sage to get Lakshmi as his daughter. Lakshmi emerged from the Potramarai tank among thousand lotuses and was thus named Komalavalli (the one who emerged from the lotus). As time goes, Hema Rishi wished for the appearance of Lord Vishnu, who is residing in the Ocean of Milk, to marry her, as prayed Lord Vishnu descended to earth as Aravamudhan in a chariot drawn by horses and elephants from his abode, the Ocean of Milk. After arriving, Supreme Lord Vishnu stayed in the Someswaran Temple to convince Lakshmi to marry him and the couple eventually got married. Hema Rishi was very happy that Supreme Lord Vishnu became his son-in-law, and also he got the grace of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi, which nullified his great offense of kicking Lord Vishnu in Ocean of Milk (Ksheerambodhi). Further, Hema Rishi requested Lord Vishnu to stay there to please the devotees, accordingly, Lord Vishnu reclines there by taking the sleeping posture of Lord Ranganatha with the names, Aravamudhan (The nectar that one never tires of), Sarangapani (one who has the bow in his hand), etc…

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Ksheerambodhi-nilaya – One who resides in the milk ocean," the personality who resides in the ocean of milk, appears to Lord Brahma and arrives to Sri Rangam as Lord Ranganatha, similarly appears to Hema Rishi and arrives to Kumbakonam as Lord Aravamudhan, in the reclining posture as Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 71: Kamalasana poojitha

Mantra: Om Kamalasana poojithaya namah

Meaning – One who is worshipped by Lord Brahma, who sits on the lotus flower (which sprouted from the navel of Lord Vishnu)

Pastime – Once Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Saraswati had a debate about the supremacy of one over the other. They approached Lord Brahma, who said his mother Goddess Lakshmi, who is the eternal consort of Lord Vishnu, is superior without any doubt. So, Goddess Saraswati got angry and left the abode of Lord Brahma, came to the earthly planet started to do her penance to achieve supremacy by getting blessings directly from Lord Vishnu. During this time, Lord Brahma organized a Yajna (Sacrifice) dedicated to Sri Vishnu in Satyavrata Kshetram (Present-day Kanchipuram). As a rule, the sacrifice should be performed along with the wife next to him. Lord Brahma invited Saraswati Devi to join him in the Yajna, but she refused. Brahma created Savitri with the

attributes of Goddess Saraswati, married her, and started the Yajna which enraged Goddess Saraswathi even more. To destroy the sacrifice, Saraswati took the form of a river, Vegavati or Sheera Nadhi or Palar River, and began to flood furiously. Lord Brahma prayed to Sri Vishnu, who is the only refuge, to stop the flood and save the Yajna (Sacrifice). At the request of Brahma, Lord Sri Vishnu took the form of Lord Ranganatha on the bed of Adhiseshan and elongated in three holy places before the flood stopped her. The sacrifice was also successfully completed. The first place where the Lord took the elongated form of Lord Ranganatha is Pallikonda, also known as Vada Arangam, the second place is Thiruparkadal near Kaveripakkam, and the third is Tiruvekkaa Temple or Yathothkari Perumal (Sonna Vannam Seitha Perumal) in Kanchipuram. In all these three places, Supreme Lord gives the darshan of Lord Ranganatha, the reclining posture of Lord Vishnu.

The first place where Lord Ranganatha tried stopping Saraswati, who was flowing as River Vegavathi (today's Palar) is Pallikonda. Here Palar flows at the downside of the Lord's feet. The second place where Supreme Lord Ranganatha attempted to stop her is called Thiruppaarkadal, near the Kaverippaakkam region of Tamilnadu. Here there is a Lord Ranganatha temple where River Vegavathi (today's Palar) passes on the head side of the lord. The third place where Supreme Lord Ranganatha finally stopped the river is called Thiruvekka, which is in Kanchipuram. In all three places, Lord Vishnu is seen in the reclined posture as Lord Ranganatha. By taking these forms of Lord Ranganatha in three places, Supreme Lord Ranganatha helped Lord Brahma to complete his sacrifice, further, he graced Goddess Saraswati by allowing her to always be in his association as River Vegavati. In all these places Lordship was worshipped by Lord Brahma.

Further, in the beginning, Supreme Lord Vishnu as appeared as Lord Ranganatha in the reclining posture and took service and worship from Lord Brahma in Satyaloka, that same Lord later arrived at Sri Rangam. So, during the time of difficulty, he remembers his worshippable deity, Lord Ranganatha, who mercifully appeared and saved him from the calamity. From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Kamalasana poojitha – One who is worshipped by Lord Brahma, who sits on the lotus flower (which sprouted from the navel of Lord Vishnu)."

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Holy Name 72: Sanandhanananda sanakasuthraamamara sevitha

Mantra: Om Sanandhanananda sanakasuthraamamara sevithaya namah

Meaning – One who is served and worshipped by the Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana, and Sanat-kumara, and all other principle demigods and sages of the universe

Pastime – Once, there was a terrible famine in the country and the sages found it difficult to get water for bathing, etc. They went in search of a suitable place for their ablutions. On their way, they came to the hermitage of Sage Gautama, on the bank of River Godavari. Gautama was very pleased with the arrival of the sages and welcomed them. He requested them to remain in his hermitage for some time more. On his way to the river, Gautama sowed the paddy seeds in fields, with the help of his disciples. He returned from the river after offering

ablutions. In the meantime, his disciples brought the corn, which had already grown, and prepared a delicious feast for the sages.

On seeing such a good feast served to them, some of the sages became envious of sage Gautama. They then planned to drive away Sage Gautama from the hermitage. The next day, they created a cow with their mystic power. She grazed the corn in the field of Gautama. While returning from the river, Gautama saw the cow and asked his disciples to drive it away; the disciples did so. The cow ran to Gautama and fell dead at his feet. Immediately the sages loudly cried out that Gautama killed the cow. Gautama realized that this was the evil plan of the sages and cursed them to be evil and cruel.

After this incident, he went on a pilgrimage. On the way, he reached Sri Rangam and prayed to Lord Ranganatha there. The Lord Ranganatha appeared before him and said that at Sri Rangam, He was being served by Vibhishana and that Gautama might go to the sacred place, where Adiranga had established Himself. Actually, Lord Ranganatha, who initially appeared to Lord Brahma and was worshipped by the great sages like Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana, Sanat-kumara, Narada, etc… in Satyaloka. Later, Lord Ranganatha took services for great demigods and arrived on earthly planets and took his services from the great kings of the Solar dynasty. At last, reached Sri Rangam and took services from great devotees. That Same Lord Ranganatha directed Gautama Rishi, as directed by the Lord, Gautama went in search of this place. On his way, he had a darshan of the River Tamraparni, the Mahendra Mountain, the Sahyadri Hills, and the birthplace of Kaveri. Then being accompanied by several sages, he came to Sri Rangapatna and continued to live there.

Once, when he was narrating the glories of Lord Ranganatha, a group of sages such as Bodhayana, Atri, Yajnavalkya, Kanva, Shuka, and Parashara came there. Gautama became very jubilant on their arrival and welcomed them all. Under the leadership of Sage Gautama, all the sages performed a sacrifice worshipping Lord Ranganatha. Pleased by their sacrifice, Lord Ranganatha appeared before them and blessed them. He instructed Gautama that His Deity was lying hidden in the nearby grove of Tulasi and was covered in an ant-hill.

All the Sages and the demigods saw the huge ant-hill in the Tulasi grove as told by the Lord. They paid obeisances before it. Then the ant-hill was removed using the milk of Kamadhenu. All the devotees present there had darshan of the magnificent Lord. Lord Ranganatha’s face radiated with great splendor. He lay resting on Adisesha, with His head resting on His right arm. His left arm stretched over His body, Lakshmi-devi on His chest, and Kaveri praying at His feet. Along with the devatas, Sage Gautama glorified the Supreme Lord. Lord Ranganatha was pleased with the prayers and blessed Sage Gautama that Sri Rangapatna would be called after him as Gautama-kshetra, and the temple would be called Brahmananda Vimana. They also had darshan of Srimati Ranganayaki to the south east of the Lord. After having darshan, they performed parikrama of the Lord. This was in the month of Mesha, on the 7th day of Shukla paksha. Later, Gautama learned Pancharatrika method of worship from Narada and worshipped the Lord. The day on which Sage Gautama first worshipped the Lord is celebrated every year as Sri Ranga Jayanti.

The sages who had accompanied Gautama to this place decided to stay here. The month of Thula commenced. During this month the River Ganges exists in River Kaveri, to purify herself of the sins begotten by the persons taking a dip in

her. The sages desired to award sanctity to this place during the Thula month and prayed to Lord Ranganatha. The Lord fulfilled the request of the sages and blessed them by saying that a bath in the Ashtatirtha on the 10th day of the Krishna paksha in Thula month, would fulfill the desires of devotees and award them liberation. A three days stay on the banks of the River Ganges, a five days stay on the banks of the River Yamuna, or a mere dip in the River Kaveri will eradicate the sins of a person. People living in the places where the wind of Kaveri blows attain liberation. Even the darshan of the river will just wash off one's sins.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sanandhanananda sanakasuthraamamara sevitha – One who is served and worshipped by the Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana, and Sanat-kumara, and all other principle demigods and sages of the universe," in this case, the same Ranganatha, who appeared to Brahma and later settled in Sri Rangam, appeared to Gautama Rishi and other sages, demigods, etc…

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Holy Name 73: Satyalokapuravasa

Mantra: Om Satyalokapura-vasaya namah

Meaning – One who resided in the city of Satyaloka, the abode of Lord Brahma

Pastime – Just before the creation when the entire universe was pitch dark and the oceanic waves were lashing, the Lord Narayana created Lord Brahma, gave him Pranava Mantra, and told him to undergo Meditation (Tapas).

In the meanwhile, the two demons named Madhu and Kaitapa stole the Vedas and converted the same into a female horse. Lord Narayana took the form of Lord Hayagriva and got back the Vedas. The Vedas were again handed over to Lord Brahma by Lord Hayagriva. Lord Brahma once again was entrusted with the work of creation. At the end of creation, Lord Brahma realized the temporary nature of this material world of creation and destruction, with utmost compassion to all living entities, he appealed to Lord Narayana and did meditation.

At that time out of the Milk Ocean, the Ranga Vimana with dazzling rays emanated, which Lord Brahma saw, and when Lord Brahma saw inside the Vimana, he saw all demigods, the saptharishis, Ashta Vasus surrounding the Lord Ranganatha lying on the bed of Serpent Adisesha. On appeal, Lord Ranganatha appeared before him and taught him the Ashtakshara mantra and also the methods of worshipping called Pancharatra Agama. Accordingly, Lord Brahma made a divine abode for Lordship in Satyaloka, Brahma's abode, and continued worshipping as ordered by the Lord. Till he handed over the deity to Surya, on the order of Lord Ranganatha.

As per Supreme Lord Ranganatha's wish, Lord Brahma then called demigod Suryadeva, Swayambu Manu, Daksha Prajapathi, and others and narrated what happened. To Suryadeva, he handed over the Ranga Vimana with Lord Ranganatha and also the methods of worship. Suryadeva in course of time handed over this to his son Vaivastha Manu and Manu to his son Ikshavaku. All these incidents happened in Satyaloka.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Satyalokapuravasa – One who resided in the city of Satyaloka, the abode of Lord Brahma."

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Holy Name 74: Chakshusha

Mantra: Om Chakshushe namah

Meaning – One who is the provider of vision (to eyes or knowledge etc…)

Pastime – Periya Nambi was full of divine qualities and played a major role in establishing Vaishnavism on a firm footing. He mastered several branches of learning at a very young age and became a disciple of Alavandar (Yamunacharya). Under the guidance of Alavandar, Periya Nambi mastered the texts of Vedanta and Divya Prabandam, a result of which he came to be known as Mahapoorna. He became the Primary Acharya for Sri Ramanuja and instructed him Divya Prabandam (Teachings of 12 Alwars). He was the instrument to bring Ramanuja to Sri Rangam on the order of his Guru Yamunacharya.

Alavandar (Yamunacharya) is universally considered to be the Acharya of Sri Ramanujacharya, though he had never spoken once to Swami Ramanuja till he lived. Whatever he taught Ramanuja he did it only through his principal 5 disciples. Alavandar's disciples were priceless gems. Periya Nambi, Thirukoshtiyur Nambi, Thirumaalaiyaandan, Thiruvarangaperumal Araiyar, and Peria Thirumalai Nambi were the chief disciples.

Among this Periya Nambi is called his sole Guru, reason his anybody can give knowledge and they are considered his Guru. But one who gives initiation with mantra is called Acharya. For Ramanujacharya on the order of Alavandar (Yamunacharya), many of his disciples gave knowledge to Ramanujacharya. But, only Periya Nambi gave him initiation with the mantra. So the entire world is considered Periya Nambi to be the actual Guru of Ramanujacharya.

There was a disciple of Alavandar named Maraneri Nambi who belonged to the lower caste. When Maraneri Nambi left his body, his funeral rites were done by Periya Nambi. Maraneri Nambi and Periya Nambi they both are god-brothers and good friends, who were in their eighties When Maraneri Nambi was now on his deathbed. He called his friend Periya Nambi and told everyone that he should be left alone with his dear friend Periya Nambi. Maraneri Nambi asked "Periya Nambi, my dear friend, I have a fear. When I leave this body they would give this body to my relatives. I have quite a lot of them, no doubt. But most of them are drunkards and cheats. They would drink arrack, dance around my dead body, and utter all profanities. I am Alavandar's disciple and I have been thinking only of my Guru and Supreme Lord all these years. Giving my body to my relatives would be like giving the sacred ghee kept for an offering in the Sacrifice to a street dog. My body in which my Guru and my Supreme Lord reside should not be humiliated by those crooks."

Hearing the final request of his dear friend held his hands and assured him, "I will take care of that. Our Supreme Lord Ranganatha, our Guru, and our beloved Ramanuja will never let that happen. I will promise you, Maraneri." By hearing the words of Periya Nambi, Maraneri Nambi was relieved. He died peacefully in his sleep that very night. When Periya Nambi heard of his friend's death he came

running to the Ashram. He supervised all the funeral arrangements himself. Periya Nambi who was born in the highest caste of Brahmans did the last rites himself and lit the funeral pyre.

Outraged by this act the local people boycotted Him from the community and took up the matter with Ramanujacharya. When questioned by Ramanujacharya, Periya Nambi replied that his act was in accordance with the Sastra and it is correct He gave the example of Lord Ramachandra performing the final rites of Jatayu (A bird). Then Periya Nambi told him that he was not superior then Lord Ramachandra in following the social etiquette and my godbrother Maraneri Nambi is not defiantly lower than Jatayu (A Bird). These reasons pacified Ramanujacharya.

Periya Nambi is one of the pioneers in bringing the revolution in social ills like the caste system, untouchability, etc.... He saw everyone as part and parcel of the Lord and has a soul, not with these bodies. This made him a transcendental personality. Later his footsteps are followed by many devotees like Ramanujacharya.

After Periya Nambi performed the final rites of Maraneri Nambi, all the people in Srirangam were not happy. They decided to isolate Periya Nambi. Once when the deity of Lord Ranganatha was taking a procession, the temple car came to a complete halt at the entrance of Periya Nambi's house and refused to move. Only after Periya Nambi was given the Holy water and due respect, the car allowed itself to proceed. It took Lord Sri Ranganatha to demonstrate the greatness of Periya Nambi and also Lord thought a lesson to everyone,

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Chakshusha – One who is the provider of vision (to eyes or knowledge, etc...),” in this case, everyone who objected to Periya Nambi was blinded in ignorance, Lord Ranganatha provided them with the knowledge of vision by enacting a pastime via Periya Nambi.

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Holy Name 75: Ashtakshatara

Mantra: Om Ashtakshataraya namah

Meaning – One who is the goal of eight syllabled mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya Namah)

Pastime – After becoming the head of the entire Sri Vaishnava clan after Sri Yamanucharya, Sri Ramanujacharya continued to reside in Sri Rangam by worshipping Lord Ranganatha and also studying under Mahapurna, Thiruvaranga Perumal Ariyar, etc... Once Mahapurna asked Sri Ramanuja to go to Ghostipuram (Thirukosthiyur) which is around 65 miles away from Sri Rangam and learn the most sacred Ashtakshari Mantra from Ghostipurna, one of the senior-most disciples of Yamunacharya. Further, he states, “Chanting Ashtakshari Mantra enables one the eternal service to the Supreme Lord in the Vaikunta, the spiritual realm. Being impressed with Ghostipurna’s devotion, Yamunacharya had revealed the Ashtakshari Mantra to Ghostipurana and had asked him not to reveal it to the undeserving as it was believed to be the most sacred mantra and the essence of scriptures.”

Sri Ramanuja walked to Ghostipuram to meet Ghostipurana. Ramanuja offered his obeisance to Ghostipurna and introduced himself. Ramanuja requested Ghostipurna to teach him the sacred Ashtakshari Mantra and its esoteric meanings. Ghostipurna told Ramanuja that he was not in a position to do so and asked him to come again. Ramanuja walked to Ghostipuram sixteen times just to learn the mantra and each time Ghostipurna sent him back without teaching the mantra by giving some excuse to test him. During his seventeenth visit, Ghostipurna told Ramanuja that he would reveal the mantra on his next visit and asked him to come alone. However, Ramanuja took his nephew Dasarathi and his dearest disciple Kuresha along with him when he went to see Ghostipurna.

Seeing Dasarathi and Kuresha along with Ramanuja, Ghostipurna, in a stern voice, said, “I had asked you to come lonely. Why did you bring these two people along with you?”

Ramanuja replied, “Sir, Dasarathi is like my staff and Kuresha is like my sacred thread. How can I live without them?”

Ghostipurna asked Dasarathi and Kuresha to stay back and took Ramanuja to a secluded place. After Ramanuja promised not to reveal the sacred mantra to the undeserving and to reveal the mantra to a devotee only after completely testing him, Ghostipurna revealed the sacred mantra to him. Ramanuja offered his obeisance to Ghostipurna and started for Sri-Rangam. On the way, Ramanuja climbed the tallest gopuram of Lord Sowmya Narayana Perumal Temple in Ghostipuram and loudly said, “Listen, everybody, I will reveal the most sacred Ashtakshari Mantra, which is considered to be the essence of scriptures and has the efficacy to deliver one from this material world. Please come here as fast as possible. This mantra is the king of all mantras and is not revealed easily to everyone. Even the great yogis had to perform severe penances to learn it. Learn this mantra and get liberated.”

Immediately a lot of people from the town gathered around the temple and Ramanuja was revealed to everyone, irrespective of their caste, class, and all other material differences. Ramanuja loudly said, “The sacred mantra is Om Namo Narayanaya! Chant it regularly and you will be liberated.”

Thus, Ramanuja started the tradition of revealing the sacred mantra to everyone from the top of the gopuram.

Ghostipurna became furious after he came to know that Ramanuja had breached his promise by revealing the most sacred mantra to everyone in the town. He summoned Ramanuja to his presence. Ramanuja came to Ghostipurna’s presence with folded hands and offered obeisance to him. Ghostipurna, who was fuming with anger said, “At the time of receiving the mantra from my spiritual master Yamunacharya, I had promised him that I would never reveal it to the undeserving and to those who do not respect the traditions. I have sinned by revealing the mantra to you. You had promised not to reveal the mantra to anyone and how did you breach the promise? Do you know the consequences of your actions?”

Ramanuja humbly said, “My dear sir, you have every right to do whatever you want with me. However, many people who heard this mantra would be liberated from this cycle of birth and death. I don’t mind going to hell to liberate these people who do not understand the importance of spiritual lives. If people like us

do not enlighten them, they will never understand the greatness of surrendering to the Supreme Lord and they can never overcome this never-ending cycle of birth and death."

Ghostipurna was moved by Ramanuja's answer and he immediately lifted Ramanuja who was sitting at his feet, embraced him tightly out of affection, and addressed Ramanuja as "Emberumanare", which means my Lord! Since then Ramanuja was called Emberumanar and the tradition of revealing the mantra to everyone, irrespective of their caste and other material titles, started. Though Ghostipurna was Ramanuja's guru, he overcame his ego and was deeply moved by Ramanuja's concern for other fellow human beings who were bound by the pangs of material nature. Ghostipurna said, "I have been chanting the holy mantra for many years and seriously practicing spiritual life ever since I became the disciple of Yamunacharya. Yet, this sort of thought never occurred to me. Come, I will teach you the meaning and the greatness of the mantra that I taught you as it will enhance your devotion manifold."

Ghostipurna took Ramanuja into his kutir and revealed to him the esoteric meaning of the Ashtakshari Mantra and the philosophy enshrined in it. Ramanuja asked Ghostipurna if he could reveal the meaning of the mantra to Kuresha and Dasarathi, whom he considered to be his staff and sacred thread. Ghostipurna told Ramanuja not to reveal the meaning of the mantra to anyone who was not willing to follow brahmacharya and without testing anyone for at least one year. Ramanuja promised to follow his instructions this time and left for Sri-Rangam.

Kuresha who was aware of the ephemeral nature of this material world was eager to know the meaning of the mantra at the earliest possible moment. Kuresha approached Ramanuja with folded hands and said, "Sir, please reveal the meaning of the great Ashtakshari Mantra to this humble servant of yours. I am desperate to know its meaning as that is believed to increase one's devotion to the Supreme Lord."

Ramanuja said, "My preceptor, Ghostipurna has asked me not to reveal the meaning to anyone unless I have tested him properly for one year and one is strictly following brahmacharya."

Kuresha once again said, "My master, this world is ephemeral and I do not know if I would live for one year. Pray, reveal the meaning to me at the earliest."

Ramanuja said, "I cannot breach the promise that I have given to my preceptor. If you cannot wait for one year, fast for one month continuously as the scriptures say that fasting for one month is equal to practicing brahmacharya for one year."

Kuresha abstained from consuming solid food for one entire month and followed all the instructions given by Ramanuja. Eventually, Ramanuja revealed the meaning of the mantra to Kuresha.

After which, being staying in Sri Rangam, Sri Ramanuja blessed several of his disciples with the sacred eight-syllabled mantra and also explains to them that, the goal of chanting the eight-syllabled mantra is to attain the eternal service at the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha (Narayana) in the spiritual realm, that's why Lord Ranganatha is known as "Ashtakshatara – One who is the goal of eight syllabled mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya)."

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Holy Name 76: Avyaya

Mantra: Om Avyayaya namah

Meaning – One who is inexhaustible or One whose personality never deteriorates

Pastime – In Sri Rangam, Sri Ramanujacharya personally administers the services to the deities, especially Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Sri Ranga Nayaki. Once Sri Ramanujacharya after completing his daily rituals went to have darshan of Lord Ranganatha, the predominating deity of Sri Rangam temple, by seeing the deity's face, Sri Ramanujacharya states, "There appears weakness of fever in the face of Lord Ranganatha. And he immediately asked his servants (or head priests) about the recent offerings to Lord Ranganatha." His servants responded by stating, "They offered Curd Rice." Sri Ramanujacharya contemplated, "Offering Curd Rice will not cause fever." Further, he asked for other items, and they stated, "They offered Blackberries (Naga Palam)." Again, Sri Ramanujacharya contemplated, "Offering Blackberries (Naga Palam) will not cause fever." Then he asked his servants do they offered both Curd Rice and Blackberries (Naga Palam) together. For which, they stated, "Yes." Then, Sri Ramanujacharya understood the cause of the weakness of fever on Lord Ranganatha's face, he states, "When both Curd Rice and Blackberries (Naga Palam) offered together will cause fever, so he ordered that next time onwards not to repeat it." So, for curing Lord Ranganatha's fever, he personally administered the special herbs and offered them to Lord Ranganatha. After that, Lord Ranganatha got rid of weakness.

When Acharyas comments on this incident, they state that "Sri Ramanujacharya, who is a commentator of Vedanta Sutra very well knows that, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Brahman is "Avyaya – One who is inexhaustible or One whose personality never deteriorates," still, Sri Ramanujacharya's this special act and service to Lord Ranganatha shows his special love for his beloved deity, Lord Ranganatha. When transcendental love for Supreme Lord overrules the mere knowledge of Vedanta." Further, Lord Ranganatha being the supreme brahman never gets fever or weakness, but his reciprocation with his dear devotee, Sri Ramanujacharya, is a transcendental loving exchange. And also, accepting the incarnation of the deity (Archavatra), Supreme Lord becomes completely dependent on his servants or worshippers, and for any mistake, they does in the worship, Lord will not protest, he accepts everything and be under their mercy, that is the special mood of Lord in his deity incarnation. Sometimes he shows signs of hunger, fever, thirst, etc… as a special reciprocation with his dear devotees, but actually, he is beyond all these things as mentioned in the Vedic scriptures. This is well-known to Sri Ramanujacharya.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Avyaya – One who is inexhaustible or One whose personality never deteriorates," in this case, even though the Supreme Lord Ranganatha is inexhaustible, still, he is bound by the love of his dear devotee, Sri Ramanujacharya.

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Holy Name 77: Ikshvaku poojitha

Mantra: Om Ikshvaku poojithaya namah

Meaning – One who was worshipped by King Ikshuvaku

Pastime – After the appearance of Lord Ranganatha along with his Pravanakara Vimana to Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma worshipped the deity as instructed by Lord himself. Once Lord Ranganatha instructed his wish to enter the clan of the Surya dynasty. Lord Brahma then called demigod Suryadeva, Swayambu Manu, Daksha Prajapathi, and others and narrated what happened. To Suryadeva, he handed over the Ranga Vimana with Lord Ranganatha and also the methods of worship. Suryadeva in course of time handed over this to his son Vaivastha Manu and Manu to his son Ikshavaku. All these incidents happened in Satyaloka.

It was this King Ikshavaku who decided that this Ranga Vimana with Lord Ranganatha be brought to this earth. Towards the end of his life, he started his ferocious tapas in the ashram of Vasishta. But Lord Brahma was feeling great separation and also not wished prepared to part with this wonderful Ranga Vimana and therefore appealed to Lord Narayana himself. The Lord pacified him and asked him to hand over the Vimana to King Ikshavaku. So Lord Brahma came down and gave Ranga Vimana as instructed.

King Ikshavaku after thus obtaining the Ranga Vimana with Lord Ranganatha constructed a beautiful temple with a compound wall on the banks of River Sarayu at his capital Ayodhya and installed the Vimana and the Lord Ranganatha. He also established hermitages for Sages like Kashyapa, Vamadeva, and Vasishta. He continued his worship of the Lord following the rules and regulations as taught by his ancestor till the end of his life.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Ikshvaku poojitha – One who was worshipped by King Ikshuvaku.”

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Holy Name 78: Vasishtadhi-sthutha

Mantra: Om Vasishtadhi-sthuthaya namah

Meaning – One who is glorified by Sage Vasishta and other sages with selected prayers

Pastime – After Lord Ranganatha appears to Brahma and is pleased by the penances of Maharaj Ikshvaku, he arrives on the earthly planet in the solar dynasty. The Gula-guru of the entire solar dynasty from Maharaj Ikshvaku to the last descended of the dynasty is Sage Vasishta. Being the family priest of the solar dynasty and also an important sage, he always worshipped the deity of Lord Ranganatha and glorified him with various prayers, not only Sage Vasishta, all the sages, and kings who had the darshan of Lord Ranganatha, offered their prayers and gloried the Lordship. The same Sage Vasishta, who is an adherent devotee of Lord Ranganatha, became an instrument in the appearance of Lord Ranganatha in Palamalai.

Once a Gandharva named Dhurdhaman was bathing in the tank with women and enjoying his royal opulence and forgetting himself in the madness of intoxication. Sage Vashista, who was returning after visiting Lord Shiva in Kailasa, when women saw the Sage Vashista immediately they got out from the water and dressed and they paid their due regards to the great sage. However, Gandharva

Dhurdhaman disregarded the presence of the Vashista rishi and continued to bathe in the tank, which he was not able to recognize, due to his intoxication. Sage Vashista, who saw Rudy and the un-disciplinary behavior of Gandharva, cursed the Gandharva to turn to a Rakshasha because as a demigod he forgot to act properly with etiquette. Shocked at this sudden turn of events, the women folks pleaded with the Vashista rishi to bring the Gandharva Dhurdhaman back to his handsome form. Sage Vashista informed them that, when he will get killed by Lord Narayana, he will take his original form has Gandharva.

Over time, Kaalava Rishi, who was meditating on Lord Narayana, especially Lord Ranganatha, during then he was harassed by this Gandharva turned Rakshasha. Perturbed by this, the Kaalava Rishi increased the severity of his penance. Pleased with his prayers, Lord Narayana (Ranganatha) appeared before the Kaalava Rishi and killed the Rakshasa with his discus thus liberating the Gandharva from his curse and helping him unite with his Gandharva wives. Kaalava Rishi offered his selected prayers and requested the Lord to stay back in the place and provide darshan to devotees in the same standing posture as Ranganatha. Later the place where this incident happened turned out to be Palamalai Ranganatha Temple in Periyanayakkan Palayam. The same Lord Ranganatha, who is in Sri Rangam, appeared in Palamalai for the protection of his devotee, Kaalava Rishi, and also to keep the words of yet another devotee, Sage Vasishta. That's why, Lord Ranganatha is known as "Vasishtadhi-sthutha – One who is glorified by Sage Vasishta and other sages with selected prayers," in this case, Lord Ranganatha was glorified by Sage Vasishta during his stay in Ayodhya, when Lord reached Sri Rangam, he was glorified by various devotees and sages, further, to bless his devotees, Lord appears in various places like Palamalai, Sri Rangapatna, etc… for the pleasure of his dear devotees, he was glorified by various devotees and sages.

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Holy Name 79: Anagha

Mantra: Om Anaghya namah

Meaning – One who is sinless or faultless

Pastime – It was a time when the atrocities of the Muslim invaders were reaching heights. Their hatred for deity worship made the Hindus tremble, not in fear for their lives, but in fear of the possible damages that the holy deities in their hallowed temples would suffer. Drastic measures were made to save the deities from disrespect. The ruthless Muslims used to destroy the deities and if that was not possible, deface them. The smaller deities made of the expensive Panchaloha (Five metals) were carried off in large heaps to Delhi, to be melted into new ornaments. The priests did their very best to cover the sanctum with bricks and send the smaller deities for safekeeping with trusted families. The Muslim forces, however, kept driving further south in conquest.

Headed by Malik Kafur, the crushing army came to the banks of the River Kaveri. On an island between the Kaveri and Kollidam stood a magnificent temple, gleaming with riches. Sri Rangam, the holy abode of Lord Ranganatha. Malik Kafur was astonished by the grandeur of the temple and by its sheer size. But his instincts immediately kicked in. "Charge", he thundered and his army broke into the largest functioning temple complex in the world.

So huge was Sri Rangam that Malik Kafur took days going around the Prakarams, plundering the people. The inner temple was fiercely protected by the staunch Vaishnavas, who refused to let the Muslims defile their holiest shrine. They held out the army for three days, time sufficient enough to build a wall in front of the main shrine and to hide out the reclining form of Lord Ranganatha. The priests even managed to bury the small deity of Goddess Ranganayaki under a neem tree.

In the process of safeguarding the deities and Sri Rangam Temple, the contribution of Vellayi Ammal is very unique. Fearing that the forces would capture the Pillailokacharya and the deities. Vellayi, performed a dance before the commander of the forces thus gaining time for Pillailokacharya to escape with the deities. Her dance lasted for hours together and finally, she took the commander to the eastern Gopuram (Tower) and pushed him down. After killing him, Vellayi jumped to her death from the tower chanting the holy name of Lord Ranganatha.

Hailing Vellayi's sacrifice, the chief of Vijayanagara forces, Kempanna, who drove away Sultanate forces, named the tower after her. The Gopuram continues to be painted white in her memory.

In this case, people may question, the all-pervasive Lord, who is present in the deity form, why can't protect themselves. The answer is, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna or Vishnu or Rama, etc… manifest in various forms in this material world – Himself as Krishna, Rama, Vishnu, etc…, His Deity form, His Holy name, etc... Among these, the Deity form of the Lord, called Archavatara, is non-different from His eternal form. Out of His causeless mercy, the Lord appears in His Archavatara form so that we can see Him and worship Him. This is an opportunity for us to engage all our senses in service of the Lord. To give us this opportunity, the acharyas of bona fide Vaishnava Sampradayas established many temples and installed the Archa-murtis of the Lord. The devotees appreciate the presence of the Lord in His Archa-vigraha form. They offer various services to Him according to the rules and regulations mentioned in the scriptures. The rule of Archavatara, deity incarnation, is that Supreme Lord will be completely depended on his devotees like a baby is dependent on his parents, whatever they do according to the rules and regulations mentioned in the scriptures, he will be present and accept it. Even though Supreme Lord is all-powerful in any of the forms he takes, in Archavatara, he stays at the mercy of his dear devotees, this is due to his causeless mercy upon the living entities and the opportunity provided for them for the services. That's why, usually deities of the Supreme Lord do not protect themselves from an attack like this from the invaders or any circumstances or negligence, etc... That is the responsibility of the devotee, who takes care of the temple or deity. In extreme circumstances based on the request of his dear devotees, Lord broke his silence and appeared as a personality and acted against the people, there are many examples in history, but still, many times Lord will just witness things and depend on his devotees. So, Lord Ranganatha is known as "Anagha – One who is sinless or faultless," there is no tinge of sins touching the Supreme Lord whatsoever.

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Holy Name 80: Raghavaradhitha

Mantra: Om Raghavaradhithaya namah

Meaning – One who was worshipped by Lord Rama

Pastime – In Ayodhya Kanda, Lord Rama's coronation has been announced, and preparations are on for the great day. Guided by Vashishta, Lord Rama goes to worship the family deity of the Ikshvakus, Lord Ranganatha, the deity who was now adorning the Srirangam temple (because Lord Rama later gave this deity to Vibhishana). Sita goes along with Rama. As Rama performs his worship to Lord Ranganatha, Sita watches. Valmiki refers to Sita here as Visalakshi — the one with wide eyes. But what made Sita look wide-eyed? Looking at Ranganatha, Sita wondered if there were any eyes that equaled His beauty. She then looked into Lord Rama's eyes and changed her mind. Here were eyes that were the most beautiful in the world. Thus, she looked from Rama to Ranganatha and as she kept looking, her eyes widened in wonder. Of course, Rama, who was Supreme Lord himself, and Ranganatha was the deity incarnation (Archavatara). So, naturally, the eyes of both were lovely.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Raghavaradhitha – One who was worshipped by Lord Rama."

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Holy Name 81: Swami

Mantra: Om Swamine namah

Meaning – One who is the Supreme master

Pastime – During Swami Nampillai stays in Sri Rangam. Once a person came to Swami Nampillai and asks "You are worshipping demigods like Indra, Varuna, Agni, Surya, etc. in your daily rituals but why not in the temples?" Swami Nampillai gives an instant and brilliant reply that "Why do you worship Agni (Fire) in Yajna and stay away from Agni (Fire) from a burial ground? In the same way, since scriptures say daily rituals must be performed as Lord Narayana's (Ranganatha's) worship keeping that Lord Narayana is the super soul for all the demigods, we do it. The same scriptures say we should not worship anyone but Lord Narayana, who is none other than Lord Ranganatha, so we don't go to other temples. Also, when these demigods are installed in a temple, they tend to develop a mode of passion and start thinking they are supreme, and since Vaishnavas are in the mode of goodness, we don't worship demigods, those who have a mode of passion."

Once when Swami Nampillai was ill, a Vaishnava is worried about that, Swami Nampillai says, "We should think that any suffering is good since according to scriptures it is said that 'the ones who have surrendered fully to Lord Narayana will wait for death happily to arrive.' At that time some Vaishnavas want to tie a sacred thread for Swami Nampillai to relieve him from illness out of their love towards Swami Nampillai, Swami Nampillai says he cannot accept that. The Vaishnavas enquire about Swami Nampillai's action and ask "It is OK for a Vaishnava to not care for himself but what is wrong with them caring for other Vaishnava's illness." Swami Nampillai explains that "if we try to cure our illness, that means we have not properly understood our constitutional position and that we are completely dependent on Lord Narayana (Ranganatha) and nothing else. And if we try to cure other's illnesses that means we have not properly understood the science of Lord Narayana and potency, that again we should depend on him to cure his devotees. So, whatever the situation, I am depending

on my Swami, Lord Ranganatha (Narayana).” That was Swami Nampillai’s dedication and he lived by that. Still, we should understand that it is the duty to care for other Vaishnavas when they are suffering as did by Maraneri Nambi when his Spiritual Master Alavandhar was suffering.

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Swami – One who is the Supreme master.”

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Holy Name 82: Rama

Mantra: Om Ramaya namah

Meaning – One who is Lord Rama

Pastime – Once a few Vaishnavas from Pandiya Kingdom (Present-day Rameshwaram and Madurai region) arrive at Sri Rangam and had the darshan of Lord Sri Ranganatha after that, they visit Swami Nampillai, who is a great Acharya in Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, and ask him to give the essence of Vaishnavism. Swami Nampillai, who is the head of Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, instructs them to think of the seashore. When they are puzzled and ask what to think about in a seashore, Swami Nampillai explains that when Lord Rama was staying in the seashore before the war with Demon Ravana, he was resting in his tent and the monkeys were watching around the area for protection. But out of fatigue when the monkeys fell asleep, Lord Rama himself went around the place protecting them.

Swami Nampillai explains that, Similarly, Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Rama, is protecting us when we are sleeping so we should have full confidence in him that he will protect us even when we are awake or sleeping and thus we should give up the attitude of trying to protect ourselves.

From the words of Swami Nampillai, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is none other than Lord Rama himself, and that’s why he requested them to meditate on the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha, the predominating deity of Sri Rangam, who is none other than Lord Rama, who is sleeping at the seashore as Ranganatha in the shrine of Thirupullani at the Madurai region.

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Holy Name 83: Rajendra-vandhitha

Mantra: Om Rajendra-vandhithaya namah

Meaning – One who is worshipped by the great kings

Pastime – Once the demigods and the demons fought a terrible war, and the devas could not defeat the demons. The demigods prayed to Lord Vishnu, and Lord Vishnu told them that, under Paranjaya's leadership, the demigods would be able to defeat the demons. Paranjaya was the King of Ayodhya and come under the solar dynasty (Surya dynasty).

Paranjaya was born to King Vikukshi, of Ayodhya. Vikushi is the son of King Ikshvaku, who is the son of Sun-god. Understanding the position of King

Paranjaya and also considering the suggestion of Lord Vishnu, the demigods came to Paranjaya and asked him to be their leader in this war.

Puzzled by the strange request of Indra, the King of Heaven. King Paranjaya went and surrendered at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord and prayed to his deity Lord Ranganatha. Lord Ranganatha deity was brought by King Ikshvaku from Brahmaloka and installed in Ayodhya and worshipped. Further his son, King Vikukshi worshipped, and following the succession, King Paranjaya worshipped the deity as per prescribed rules and regulations. That's why, when King Paranjaya was in trouble he immediately went and took the shelter of his only refuge, Lord Ranganatha. After seeing the surrender of King Paranjaya, Lord Ranganatha mentions to him, "Oh Paranjaya! Don't become puzzled. I have my blessings and support for you for conquering the demons in the war. You are being my representative ruling the city of Ayodhya, which means "The unconquerable city," nobody can fight and win over Ayodhya, this is possible, due to my potency and blessings, and the same applies to the person, who ruled or guided by me (Lord Ranganatha). So, undoubtedly victory will be yours."

After getting clarity and confirmation from Supreme Lord Vishnu, Paranjaya agreed to fight with demons by supporting demigods. For doing this, he placed only one condition, which is he will fight with demons only if he could fight the war seated on Indra's shoulders. So, Indra somehow wants victory over demons and adopted the form of a bull. Paranjaya fought the war seated on the bull and defeated the demons. Hereafter, Paranjaya came to be known as Kakutstha because he fought the war sitting on the shoulder (Kakut) of Indra. Lord Rama is also known as Kakutstha, which means descendant of Kakutstha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Rajendra-vandhitha – One who is worshipped by the great kings."

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Holy Name 84: Vibheeshanarchitha-padha

Mantra: Om Vibheeshanarchitha-padhaya namah

Meaning – One whose lotus feet were worshipped by King Vibheeshana

Pastime – Thondaradipodi Azhwar sings in his Thirupalliyezhuchi composition on Lord Ranganatha, which is used in the service of his daily awakening in the morning as Suprabatha. In verse 5, he states,

Pullambina putkallum poom pozhilgalin vai,
Poyitru gangul pugundhadhu pulari,
Kalandhadhu gunadisai kannai kadalaravam,
Kalli vandu mizhatri kalambagam punaindhu
Alangkalan thodaiyal kondu adiyinnai pannivaan,
Amarargal pughundhanar aadhalil amma,
ilangaiyar cone vazhipaadu seikoyil
Emberuman! Palli yezhundharulaye!

Meaning: Birds are squabbling in the groves, Darkness has departed and dawn has broken, From the Eastern side the roar of the ocean is heard, The liberated souls are waiting with garlands of flowers with bees humming over them to

worship you! Vibeeshanan, the king of Lanka has brought you, from the ruler of Ayodhya (Lord Rama) to halt here (Sri Rangam) and preside over us! He often comes here to this temple (Sri Rangam) to worship you! Sriman Narayana (Supreme Lord Ranganatha)! Please wake up and bless us all.

In Sri Rangam, some scholars challenge whether Swami Desikan can compose 1000 hymns in praise of Lord Sri Ranganatha in one day. Swami accepted the challenge and he prayed to Lord Ranganatha to bless him to compose 1000 stotras (verses) and the Lord commanded that Swami Desikan should compose the stotra on the Divine Sandals (Paadukas). Swami Desikan did not write anything during the day as he was busy teaching etc. and at the night also he slept till 4 a.m. Then he started writing down the stotras (verses) and in less than 3 hours he has composed 1008 stotras on the Paadukas (Lord's divine sandals). Even a fast recital of the entire stotras will take more than 6 hours and swami has composed them in such a short time since he was "Kavitarkika Simham, which means lion among the poets and in Tharka Sastras."

One more version of the story is that, In Sri Rangam, Azhagiya Manavaala Naayanaar, brother of Pillai Lokacharya, and Swami Vedanta Desikan went to worship Lord Ranganatha. The Azhagiya Manavaala Naayanaar was captivated by the lotus feet of the Lord and wanted to compose a Stotram (Verses) praising the same. Swami Vedanta Desikan felt that the Divya Mani Paadukas (Transcendental Sandals) of the Lord were equally captivating and offered to compose a Stotram on the Sandals of the Lord Ranganatha, before daybreak the next day. But, he had slept almost till the small hours of the morning of the appointed day. When there were hardly a couple of hours to go before sunrise, the agitated disciples woke him up to remind him of his promise. Instantly, he commenced pouring out with bewildering rapidity an epic 'Paaduka Sahasram' and completed it well before daybreak. The 1,000 verses of this epic are an example of literary excellence and lofty thoughts- a wonderful masterpiece of how a single subject like the sandals could be expressed in so many different ways and yet hold up the imagination and interest of the audience.

Lord Sri Raganatha's Paaduka Sahasram verse number 312, Sri Vedanta Desikan states,

satyalokath sakalamahithath sthanatho va raghunam
shanghe matha: samadhikagunam salkatham sahyajaya
purvam purvam chariparichitham padhuke! yath thyajanthya
nitham nathasthadhidhamitharannlyathe na thvayasou

Meaning: Oh Padhuka of Sri Ranganatha! You chose Sri Rangam, the island on River Kaveri, as the most desirable place compared to Satyaloka (the abode of Lord Brahma) or Ayodhya, which is the site of liberation for all of the animate and inanimate beings at the time of Rama's ascent to Sri Vaikunta. You persuaded Ranganatha to halt at Sri Rangam permanently because of its unquestioned superiority among liberation conferring sites and stopped Him from continuing His journey to Lanka to fulfill the pledge given by Lord Rama to Vibhishana. Sri Rangam has now become the foremost site for realizing the blessings of liberation for those, who seek refuge at Your Lord Ranganatha's holy feet, which you adorn. Thanks to Your intervention, Ranganatha is not going to budge ever from Sri Rangam. We are indeed saved.

As stated by Vedanta Desikan, actually, Lord Rama gave the word to Vibhishana to take the deity to Lanka, but Supreme Lord Ranganatha desired to stay in Sesha Peetam (Sri Rangam) at the same time, he agreed to grace Lanka always, and accept Vibhishana's services. Accordingly, on the regular basis, Vibhishana arrives at Sri Rangam to worship his beloved deity from that time onwards. Further, Supreme Lord's lotus feet themselves have such glory and we can imagine the glory of Supreme Lord Ranganatha's glory and his servants like Vibhishana's glories. That's why Lord Ranganatha is known as "Vibheeshanarchitha-padha – One whose lotus feet were worshipped by King Vibheeshana."

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Holy Name 85: Lanka Rajya-varaoradha

Mantra: Om Lanka rajya-varaoradhaya namah

Meaning – One who constantly graces the kingdom of Lanka (according to the boon given to King Vibheeshana)

Pastime – Yet another version (as per local legend) of Lord Ranganatha settling in Sri Rangam. During the coronation ceremony, Lord Rama gave many gifts like gold to Vaanaras and Rakshasas who had helped him in many ways to get back Sita. Though Rama had done a great favor to Sugriva and Vibhishana by making them kings, he still wanted to give them some more. It was his virtue. Lord Rama thought that gold was not enough for Vibhishana. He thought of giving something more than gold. There was a lot of difference between Sugriva and Vibhishana. Vibhishana was a real Surrendered Devotee as he didn't have any expectations. Vibhishana left his own brother, Ravana, to help Rama. But Sugriva befriended Lord Rama to get back his wife Tara and get back the kingdom from Vali.

Lord Rama protected Vibhishana as he surrendered to him. He didn't think Vibhishana must be coming up with a plan to help Ravana. Such was the virtue of Lord Rama and Vibhishana. For these reasons, Lord Rama wanted to give something more to Vibhishana and also he wished to grace Lanka, which will be ruled by his dear devotee, Vibhishana, now. So, he gave his family's deity, Lord Sri Ranganatha to Vibhishana, along with the entire temple tower. He advised Vibhishana not to keep the deity and temple tower down anywhere. If it is kept down, it cannot be moved and permanently gets rooted to the ground. Vibhishana started his journey to Lanka. He went Southwards from Ayodhya and he reached the River Kaveri in Tamilnadu. Meanwhile, demigods thought, how can a deity worshipped by all great kings, even Supreme Lord Rama himself can go out of the holy land of Bharatavarsa? So, they entrusted the matter to Lord Vinayaka, who was also just seeing all these. So, Lord Vinayaka disguised himself as a Brahmachari. At that time, Vibhishana wanted to take bath in the holy river Kaveri and wish to perform the even ritual. As Lord Rama told him not to keep the deity down at any place, Vibhishana wanted someone to hold the deity till he completes his bath and evening rituals. At that time, he saw the Brahmachari, who was none other than Lord Vinayaka. Vibhishana gave the deity to him and told him not to keep it down. The Brahmachari said, "If I cannot hold it, I will call you 3 times. If you don't come after 3 calls, I would keep it down". With his mystical power, Vibhishana made the temple or deity as small as to hold by Brahmachari. Vibhishana accepted the condition. He then went to bath. The Brahmachari called Vibhishana 3 times, but he couldn't come within the time as

he called him very fast. The Brahmachari then kept the deity down and the deity was deeply rooted to the ground. Vibhishana tried to lift the deity but in vain.

Vibhishana got very angry. He wanted to hit the Brahmachari on his head. The Brahmachari started running. Vibhishana also chased him. As he was Lord Vinayaka, he couldn't be caught. The Brahmachari ran to the mountain peak and showed his real form. He said to Vibhishana "Don't worry, Vibhishana. Even though there is no practice of keeping Lord Vishnu's deity facing south, I have kept it facing southwards (facing your kingdom Lanka) so that Lord Vishnu will be showering his blessings on your kingdom". Lord Ranganatha also informed the Vibhishana same and pacified him by stating, he will constantly grace his kingdom, Lanka, and asked him to visit him to have his darshan. This is how Lord Ranganatha landed at Sri Rangam and faced south direction facing Lanka. The mountain peak where Vinayaka ran to escape from Vibhishana is now Rockfort Temple. Even though it is a local folktale, traditionally they say Lord Ranganatha himself wished to stay in-between the two Kaveri rivers, that time place is known as Sesha Peetam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Lanka Rajya-varaoradha – One who constantly graces the kingdom of Lanka (according to the boon given to King Vibheeshana).”

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Holy Name 86: Kaveri Madhya-nilaya

Mantra: Om Kaveri madhya-nilayaya namah

Meaning – One who resides in the middle of the Kaveri river

Pastime – Once in the Himalayas, the personified rivers Ganga, Kaveri, Yamuna, and Saraswati were playing. One Gandharva saw these sacred rivers and offered obeisance and worshiped them from the distance in the sky. Seeing this all the rivers started arguing amongst themselves — whom did he worship? Yamuna and Saraswati stopped arguing after some time however Kaveri and Ganga didn’t seem to reach any agreement. Finally, they both approached Lord Vishnu for the answer.

River Ganga told Lord Vishnu that since she originated from His lotus feet, she was greater than Kaveri. Lord Vishnu agreed. However, Kaveri did not agree and wanted to become greater than Ganga. Thus she performed penances to please Lord Vishnu. Soon the Lord was pleased by her penances and asked her to ask for a boon. She requested Lord to sleep on her confluences and her bank and thus bless her. Lord agreed and told her that she would flow like a garland on the Lord’s chest — a better position than Ganga, that also not once many times.

Brahma gave the Ranga Vimana to King Ikshwaku. From Ikshwaku to Lord Rama, this Vimana was worshiped in Ayodhya. After the Pattabhisheka, Lord Rama gifted Ranga Vimana to Vibhishana as a token of love. While carrying the Vimana, Vibhishana passed the province of Srirangam. There the Chola kings and the sages requested Vibhishana to perform the Adi Brahmotsava in Srirangam instead of Lanka. Vibhishana agreed. He kept the Vimana in midst of the River Kaveri and worshipped it. King Dharma Varma Chola and the other sages joined in the great celebration. Even today, the Brahmotsava is celebrated on the day

of a full moon in Panguni month to commemorate this event. After finishing the pujas, Vibhishana went to lift the Vimana but he was unable to even move it.

He prayed to Lord Ranganatha to save him from this situation. Lord Ranganatha told Vibhishana about His promise to River Kaveri and would not want to move from there. This broke the heart of Vibhishana. Understanding the heart of his dear devotee, Lord Ranganatha laid Himself facing south to constantly bless Vibhishana in Lanka. To this day Lord Ranganatha is being worshiped in Srirangam temple and blessing His devotees. King Dharma Varma constructed the gigantic temple in order to install the Ranga Vimana. He worshiped the Ranga Vimana for a longer time and at last achieved liberation.

River Kaveri was very pleased by the special service and position provided by Lord Ranganatha, further, to show special grace to River Kaveri, Lord appeared to various sages and devotees and started to reside in Sri Rangapatna in midst of the River Kaveri, further Madhya Ranga Kshetra in midst of the River Kaveri, Vadaranga Kshetra in midst of the River Kaveri, etc… everywhere River Kaveri got the opportunity to serve the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha, that's why, he is known as "Kaveri Madhya-nilaya – One who resides in the middle of the Kaveri river."

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Holy Name 87: Kalyanapura-vasthuka

Mantra: Om Kalyanapura-vasthukaya namah

Meaning – One who is the essence of the auspicious town (Sri Rangam)

Pastime – Srutha Prakasika Bhattar was born as the grandson of Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar and he becomes the great scholar and Acharya of Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya. During this time, it was 1327 A.D., a black year in the history of Sri Rangam. The temple town was about to be attacked by Malik Kafur, the head of the army of the Sultan. Fear spread among the Vaishnavas in the town, regarding the safety of the deity of Lord Ranganatha. It was a time when the entire administration is under Acharya Sri Sudarshana Bhattar. Sri Pillai Lokaachaarya and Swami Desikar were also present in Sri Rangam at that time. Plans were made to safeguard the temple and its belongings even at the cost of one's life. Their main aim was then to safeguard the deity of Lord Ranganatha from the wicked attackers.

It was a time when the atrocities of the Muslim invaders were reaching heights. Their hatred for deity worship made the Hindus tremble, not in fear for their lives, but in fear of the possible damages that the holy deities in their hallowed temples would suffer. Drastic measures were made to save the deities from disrespect. The ruthless Muslims used to destroy the deities and if that was not possible, deface them. The smaller deities made of the expensive Panchaloha (Five metals) were carried off in large heaps to Delhi, to be melted into new ornaments. The priests did their very best to cover the sanctum with bricks and send the smaller deities for safekeeping with trusted families. The Muslim forces, however, kept driving further south in conquest.

Headed by Malik Kafur, the crushing army came to the banks of the River Kaveri. On an island between the Kaveri and Kollidam stood a magnificent temple, gleaming with riches. Sri Rangam, the holy abode of Lord Ranganatha. Malik

Kafur was astonished by the grandeur of the temple and by its sheer size. But his instincts immediately kicked in. “Charge”, he thundered and his army broke into the largest functioning temple complex in the world.

So huge was Sri Rangam that Malik Kafur took days going around the Prakarams, plundering the people. The inner temple was fiercely protected by the staunch Vaishnavas, who refused to let the Muslims defile their holiest shrine. They held out the army for three days, time sufficient enough to build a wall in front of the main shrine and to hide out the reclining form of Lord Ranganatha. The priests even managed to bury the small deity of Goddess Ranganayaki under a neem tree.

In the process of safeguarding the deities and Sri Rangam Temple, the contribution of Nartaki Padmini is very unique. Nartaki Padmini uses to serve Lord Ranganatha by lighting the temple of Sri Rangam, dancing for the pleasure of Lord Ranganatha, etc… Fearing that the forces would capture the Pillailokacharya and the deities.

Nartaki Padmini, while seeing the situation and imminent danger, she prayed to Lord Ranganatha, and with her womanly nature she was not able to do anything for assisting the community to protect and safeguard the deities of Lord Ranganatha. Because all the evil forces will soon attack the Sri Rangam temple, there was no time for safeguarding. Understanding the difficult situation and praying to Lord Ranganatha, she took the brave task of approaching the army of Islamic forces after drinking the poison mixed with alcohol with her beautiful body she mesmerized the Islamic commander and performed a dance before the commander, thus gaining time for Pillailokacharya to escape with the deities. Her dance lasted for hours together and finally when the commander approached Nartaki Padmini with lusty desire and kissed her and drank the poisonous alcohol from her lips and dead in some time. This made the Islamic forces perplexed and took some time to appoint the next commander, before the attack.

Meanwhile, Nartaki Padmini escaped from the Islamic camp and informed Vedanta Desikar about the same and requested him to utilize the time and safeguard the deities of Lord Ranganatha. In turn, Vedanta Desikar hailed her sacrifice and prayed to Lord Ranganatha for her liberation. After this incident, she left her mortal coils in Sri Rangam and reached the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu.

As per the plan, the procession deity of Lord Ranganatha (Lord Azhagiya Manavaalan) was moved out of the shrine. A huge wall was raised in front of the reclining deity of Lord Ranganatha. A dummy look-alike was created and placed in front of that wall. At the shrine of Goddess Ranga Nayaki, the deities were placed in a huge pit dug in front of the shrine, and dummies were put in place of the originals.

The second plan of action was to move the procession deity of Lord Ranganatha (Lord Azhagiya Manavaalan) from Sri Rangam to Tirupati. Though our Swami Desikar wanted to accompany Lord Ranganatha’s deity to Tirupati, he could not do so, as he had to execute the third and very important plan of action. He had to protect the great work "Shrutha Prakashika", a work comprising of handwritten notes on Sri Bhashyam, recorded by Sri Sudarshana Bhattar on palm leaves and was the only authentic commentary available on the Sri Bhaashyam of Sri Ramanujar at that time.

Swami Desikar also had to protect the two young sons of Sri Sudarshana Bhattar, Sri Parankusha Bhattar, and Sri Vedaachaarya. Swami Desikar then took the manuscripts of Shrutha Prakashika from Sri Sudarshana Bhattar and promised him that he shall at all times protect that manuscript and it shall always be close to his heart. Many people like Sudarshana Bhattar etc… could not leave Sri Rangam due to old age. Sri Sudarshana Bhattar had advised Swami Desikar to protect himself and the manuscripts at any cost. He wished that there should be at least one person who could continue to light the world with the wisdom of Sri Ramanuja.

Along with the sons of Sri Sudarshana Bhattar and many other disciples, Swami Desikar then begins his journey northwards. But by that time, the army had already entered the temple town. Many great people were massacred. The temple town was looted and ransacked. Swami Desikar and his followers spent the night hiding among corpses and at day-break made their way out of Sri Rangam. On the way they hid the great work of Shrutha Prakashika of Sri Sudarshana Bhattar in a pit dug along the banks of river Kaveri and marked the place so that they could retrieve it later. He moved to Satyakala, a place in Karnataka.

In Satyakala, Swami Desikar gave discourses on Shrutha Prakashika and raised the two sons of the Sri Sudarshana Bhattar as his own. He left Satyakala for Thirunarayanapuram to offer prayers to Sri Ramanuja and Lord Selva Pillai. There, he composed Yatiraja Sapthathi, the verses glorification of Sri Ramanuja. At Thirunarayanapuram, his son, Kumara Varada Acharya delivered discourses on Periya Vachan Pillan commentary of Tiruvoimozhi called 6000 Padi (6000 Verse Commentary) with the help of Swami Vedanta Desika’s notes called "Nigama Parimalam”.

Swami Desikan while at Karnataka composed a stotra called "Abhithi Sthava" praying to Sri Ranganatha to restore the glory of Sri Rangam. Swami was crying about the death of many Acharyas and Vaishnavas by the ruthless invaders. We can even see the place where he stayed in Karnataka and there the deity of Swami Desikan is unique as he is in standing posture as if he was on his toes ever ready to travel back to Sri Rangam. After 12 years when the Muslims were thrown out of Sri Rangam, Swami Desikan came back to Sri Rangam.

When Swami Desikan came back to Sri Rangam and it was time for the yearly festivity (Utsavam) when the entire Divya Prabandham (Azhwars Compositions) will be recited in 20 days. For the first ten days, the utsavam is in the day, and the next 10 days in the night. Since this utsavam was stopped for many years due to the Islamic invasion, the orthodox people objected to the recitation of Divya Prabandham since it is in Tamil and only Sanskrit Vedas should be recited. They also objected to installing deities of Azhwars because they were just human beings and many of them were not even Brahmins. Swami Desikan argued with them at length proving that the Divya Prabandham is nothing but the essence of Vedas and Upanishads and the Azhwars are great devotees of Lord Narayana and they are fit to be worshipped inside the temple. Finally, the orthodox Brahmins agreed with Swami Desikan and the utsavam has been celebrated grandly. Swami was pained to see the objections and to make sure no such problems in the future he got the details of the utsavam written in stone and installed in the temple.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Kalyanapura-vasthuka – One who is the essence of the auspicious town (Sri Rangam),” temporarily when the inauspiciousness surrounded the auspicious town of Sri Rangam, every person aims in Sri Rangam is to save the deities of Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Ranga Nayaki, after sacrificing many lives, they safe-guarded the same. They all considered that the essence of Sri Rangam town is only Lord Ranganatha, and he will be forever the essence of Sri Rangam town. Later, when the Muslim attack was subdued by the pious Kings of this land, the deity of Lord Ranganatha (Utsava deity) was brought back safely, and also the main deity in the shrine, which was covered by the temporary wall also was removed. Then the worship of Lord Ranganatha started as usual.

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Holy Name 88: Dharma-varmadhi Cholendra-poojitha

Mantra: Om Dharma-varmadhi cholendra-poojithaya namah

Meaning – One who was worshipped by the great Chola kings like Dharma Varma

Pastime – After the appearance of Lord Brahma, Lord Ranaganatha along with Vimana descended to Ayodhya and was worshipped by King Ikshavaku in the Surya dynasty. This was continued by the Kings of the Ikshavaku dynasty. In this lineage appeared King Dasaratha who had no issues. Hence, he performed Ashwamedha Yagna and Putra Kamisithi Yagna. As a result, he begot four sons – the eldest being Sri Ramachandra. This Aswamedha Yagna was attended by Chola King Dharma Varma (also known as Dharma Brahma), who used to rule the southern part of India on behalf of King Dasaratha. He was taken in by the splendor of this Ranga Vimana and Lord Ranganatha so much that he wished the people of his state/kingdom would worship this Lord Ranganatha. He, therefore, wished that he could install this Vimana in his state on the banks of River Kaveri. The only way to bring Lord Ranganatha is to do meditation and he sat in meditation on the banks of Chandra Pushkarini amidst of Kaveri river.

The sages requested him to stop his meditation and told King Dharma Varma that, the day was not so far for Lord Ranganatha’s arrival at the same spot on the shores of Chandra Pushkarini amidst of Kaveri river.

The sages also narrated the story of how the place near Chandra Pushkarini became a hillock of mud. When one of the Shiva devotees was plucking flowers for the worship of Lord Shiva, the then-ruling Chola king took away by force one of the flowers meant for Lord Shiva’s worship. So Lord Shiva cursed that the entire place is covered with mud. That town became a forest of mud. On the north side of this place, lived a disciple of Pulasthiya Muni called Talapya Muni. He was frequently troubled by a demon named Vyagram who lived in Neelivanam. He was troubling other sages, who were living there. Lord Narayana killed the demon and gave darshan to the sages. They requested the Lord to stay back. The Lord replied ‘I shall be born as the son of King Dasaratha and when I come to vanquish Ravana, the Vimana will be handed over to King Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana. King Vibhishana will bring me here and at the request of ruling King Dharma Varma, he will leave me here and I will stay back. King Dharma Varma after hearing the words of the great sages, gave up his penance or meditation and waited for the day of the Lord’s arrival.

When Sri Ramachandra killed Ravana and returned to Ayodhya during his pattabhishekam, he handed over the priceless gift of Ranga Vimana with Lord Ranganatha to King Vibhishana with a requesting him to continue the worship as done earlier by his ancestors.

King Vibhishana having received the transcendental Ranga Vimana with Lord Ranganatha put on his head started his travel towards Lanka. As he was traveling, he happened to reach this place known as Dharma Rangam during mid-day. King Vibhishana wanted to perform his mid-day rituals, so he placed the Ranga Vimana on the banks of River Kaveri near Chandra Pushkarini on Anantha Peeta and started to worship Lord Ranganatha.

Hearing the arrival of Lord Ranganatha and Ranga Vimana on the banks of River Kaveri, King Dharma Varma came running to witness the same.

The worship of Lord Ranganatha was witnessed by sages and hundreds of other devotees. Dharma Varma requested King Vibhishana to leave the Ranga Vimana with the Lord Ranganatha for a few days here for the people of his state to offer worship to the Lord, but King Vibhishana refused. King Vibhishana thought tomorrow he will perform Brahmotsava in Lanka and therefore he thought of leaving as early as possible. King Dharma Varma came to know about the impending Brahmotsava celebrations and therefore appealed to King Vibhishana to perform the same here and then leave for Lanka with his prized possession. The King was keen on his subjects enjoying the celebrations and also benefiting from them. So King Vibhishana agreed to perform the Brahmotsava celebrations here, King Dharma Verma thanked him and proceeded to make all necessary arrangements. The celebrations went on in a grant manner and people were very happy.

King Vibhishana now wanted to take leave of King Dharma Varma and proceed to his country Lanka. With that intention, he tried to lift the Ranga Vimana and to his surprise, the Vimana would not move an inch.

Lord Ranganatha appeared before him and said ‘Vibhishana, I would like to remain here and fulfill my promise to King Dharma Varma to adorn this place on the banks of River Kaveri. I am highly pleased with your devotion and sincerity and so I grant the boon that, I shall stay here facing your country of Lanka. Please go to Lanka and continue your worship of me. King Vibhishana agreed to the order and desire of Lord Ranganatha.

This Chola King Dharma Varma then built towers, a big Compound wall around the temple, tanks, and established a Nandavana or Gardens. He continued the worship of Lord Ranganatha following the norms laid down by his predecessors. It was thus that the Ranga Vimana and Lord Ranganatha arrived in this town and the town came to be called Sri Rangam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Dharma-varmadhi Cholendra-poojitha – One who was worshipped by the great Chola kings like Dharma Varma.”

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Holy Name 89: Punya keerthana

Mantra: Om Punya keerthanaya namah

Meaning – Chanting of one whose glories, acts, messages, etc… bring the virtuousness

Pastime – Once a King named Nanda Bhopala relinquished his kingdom and headed towards the forest handing over the crown to his son Dharma Gupta. One day, while returning from a trip, the king had to stay back in the forest as it had suddenly become dark.

He climbed a tree to sleep there for the night only to be joined there by a scared Bear that had been chased down by a hungry lion. Both of them agreed to take turns and sleep half the period of the night and keep vigil against the hungry lion.

With the Bear staying awake for the first half, the Lion tried to negotiate a deal with the Bear asking him to push down the King in return for being allowed to go free. Not willing to go back on the agreement with the King, the Bear refused.

Well past midnight the Bear and the King exchanged turns and it was now time for the king to keep vigil. When the Lion tried to strike the same deal with the King, he immediately pushed the Bear down. However, to the shock of King Dharma Gupta, the Bear escaped. Once away at a distance, the bear informed the king that he was no normal Bear and that he belonged to the clan of Bhrigu Rishi.

The Rishi in the form of a Bear also informed the Lion that he was a Yaksha who had turned into a Lion as a result of the curse of Gautama Rishi and that it was time for him to be liberated from the rishi's curse.

The Bear who was angry at the king for betraying the trust placed in him for protection during that night cursed him to turn into a lunatic. Shocked at this, king Dharma Gupta sought his father’s help. Former King Nanda Bhopala took his son to a sage who suggested that Dharma Gupta bathe in the Sacred Padma Theertham in Palamalai and invoke the blessings of Lord Ranganatha there. Dharma Gupta was relieved from his curse at Palamalai by pleasing the Lord Ranganatha with his penance and taking a dip in the Padma Theertham pond, his heart was completely cleansed of all bad qualities and he went back to rule his kingdom righteously. And he became an adherent devotee of Lord Ranganatha and always use to meditate on the glories or pastimes of the Supreme Lord and use to rule the kingdom as the servant of the Supreme Lord.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Punya keerthana – Chanting of one whose glories, pastimes, messages, etc… bring the virtuousness,” in this case even though Dharma Gupta initially had many bad qualities, due to the mercy of Lord Ranganatha, he obtained the saintly qualities. This incident is evident that, if we glorify Supreme Lord’s transcendental qualities, we will obtain the same through his mercy, but, on other hand, if we defame Supreme Lord, we will also obtain the same as result.

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Holy Name 90: Purushothama Kruthasthana

Mantra: Om Purushothama Krutha-sthanaya namah

Meaning – One who resides in the place, which was built by the great kings

Pastime – Thirumangai Azhwar was born in a small village near Sirkazhi in Tamil Nadu, in the Mutharaiyar family (warrior community). Azhwar's father was Nilam Mutharaiyar, a general under the Chola empire. He is the twelfth and last among all Azhwars.

Thirumangai Azhwar was skilled in archery and worked as a military commander himself for the Chola king. In recognition of his valor, he has rewarded a small place called Ali Nadu to govern, it's capital being Thirumangai. He earned the title Thirumangai Mannan or King of Thirumangai.

His call to the spiritual journey and superior bhakti came when he married the divine and most beautiful Kumudavalli Naachiyaar. She set two conditions for him before she would marry him. One was for him to embrace Vaishnavism by taking proper initiation from an Acharya and the second was to serve 1008 devotees of the Lord with a grand meal daily for one year. And also he has taken up the task of renovation of Sri Ranganatha Temple in Sri Rangam.

Azhwar's ardent desire to keep his promise to his wife made him spend beyond his means. Over time he lost his Kingdom and was not able to serve the temple through renovation. In the extreme situation, he decided to rob the rich to keep up the feeding of the devotees of the Lord and continue his temple renovation service. Still, he travels to various holy places of Lord Vishnu and glorifies the deity by singing praises.

In Sri Rangam, once Lord Ranganatha appeared in person and asked Thirumangai-azhwar to stop his wanderings and focus on completing the temple work and strengthening the temple by constructing ramparts, towers, corridors, chambers, etc., at Sri Rangam. Thirumangai-azhwar became very happy and was more than willing to comply with the Lord’s orders. Thirumangai-azhwar started to like the merciful nature of Lord Ranganatha and has sung many hymns glorifying the Lord.

As Thirumangai-azhwar did not have any assets or possessions, he started to worry about sourcing funds to carry out the Lord’s orders as a very vast sum was needed to complete the temple. Thirumangai-azhwar summoned his sister Andalammai’s husband, Yatirasan, to discuss sourcing funds for the temple.

Even as Thirumangai-azhwar told Yatirasan about the Lord’s order to construct some portions of the Sri-Rangam temple, Yatirasan suggested that they steal Lord Buddha’s gigantic golden idol, which was installed in a mysterious temple near Nagapattinam (the present Nagpur). The Lord’s order was the law for Thirumangai-azhwar and he was not the one to regret breaking any rule to fulfill the Lord’s bidding. Moreover, stealing was not new to Thirumangai-azhwar.

Therefore, Thirumangai-azhwar readily agreed to Yatirasan’s suggestion and summoned his former associates who used to help him rob the businessmen to enable him to fulfill the promise that he had made to his wife, Kumudavalli. History is replete with examples of many criminals who have become great saints after having transformed themselves.

However, Thirumangai-azhwar was and is worshipped as a saint even when he continued his criminal activities and murdered people. One has to understand

the fact that Thirumangai-azhwar was so engrossed with his devotion and commitment to the Lord’s cause that he did not mind doing anything for the Lord and did not do those things for his gains. He did not mind risking his reputation as a saint and a great poet while committing such criminal activities to generate funds for the temple.

Thirumangai-azhwar left for Nagapattinam along with his brother-in-law, Yatirasan, and his associates and, upon reaching there, started to inquire about the temple. An old lady who knew about the mysterious temple told them that strangers can't enter that temple as it is craftily hidden from public view and its entrance is completely mechanized and those who dared to enter the temple without knowing how to operate the mechanical door were cut to pieces by the wheel that was designed to guard the temple. Very few people knew about the temple’s exact location and the secret lever that helps one to open the temple entrance. Therefore, Thirumangai-azhwar decided to trick the chief architect of the temple into revealing the mysteries of the temple.

As the architect of the temple lived on a small island on the west coast of the country, Thirumangai-azhwar sailed along with his associates to the island and located the architect’s house. Following their plan, Thirumangai-azhwar sat along with his associates on the portal of the architect’s house and started to discuss the theft of the Buddha’s idol and began to lament.

One of Thirumangai-azhwar’s associates saw the architect passing by and loudly said, “The Turks have destroyed even that mysterious temple of our Lord and have taken His golden Deity away. What is the use of living like this and how many more temples will they destroy?” The architect overheard the conversation and asked them to tell if the temple at Nagapattinam was destroyed and the group replied in the affirmative.

The architect was shocked and he started to curse himself for having boasted about the temple with the Turks. Without realizing the trick that was being played upon him, the architect started to lament saying, “How could they find the lever that was craftily hidden beneath the stone pavement under the water that falls from Gomukhi, how did they locate the secret entrance that is located at the crown of the temple or how did they manage to disconnect the mechanized wheel that guards the entrance of the temple and cuts those who dare to enter the sanctum?” Thirumangai-azhwar and his associates thus collected all the information that they needed to steal the idol from none other than the architect of the temple on the pretext of consoling him.

After visiting Nagapattinam to get sufficient information for stealing the Lord Buddha idol from the architect of the temple in a very tricky way. As Thirumangai-azhwar did not have sufficient money to sail back from Nagapattinam to the South, he and his associates disguised themselves as mendicants and convinced the captain of a ship that was carrying betel nuts to Nagapattinam to ferry them free of cost by preaching about various aspects of Vedanta to him. Thirumangai-azhwar did not have money to execute his plans to steal the golden idol and, therefore, he started to worry about it. He devised a master plan to trick the captain of the ship to part with half of the cargo that he was carrying to Nagapattinam.

Thirumangai-azhwar took out one betel nut from his pocket and started to cut it into two halves while speaking with the captain, who had become his good friend

by then. One-half of the betel nut fell into the stack of betel nuts that the ship was carrying and Thirumangai-azhwar started to search for it. The captain of the ship asked Thirumangai-azhwar to take some betel nuts from the stack instead of searching for the lost piece.

Thirumangai-azhwar told him that he wanted that particular piece of betel nut for some purpose and the captain told him that he would ensure that it is given to him at the time of unloading the cargo at Nagapattinam. Thirumangai-azhwar insisted that he record his promise in a piece of paper to ensure that he keeps his promise and made the unsuspecting captain write that “he would give half the nut when the cargo is downloaded at Nagapattinam.”

On reaching Nagapattinam, Thirumangai-azhwar and his associates demanded half of the cargo from the captain and started to claim that they had entered into a business agreement with the captain to transport the betel nuts belonging to them. They showed the written agreement given by the captain to substantiate their claim. The captain tried to refute their claim and Thirumangai-azhwar dragged him to the court that adjudicated business disputes at Nagapattinam. The court gave its verdict in favor of Thirumangai-azhwar as he had a written agreement to substantiate his claim and the captain was forced to part with half of the cargo.

Thirumangai-azhwar felt very bad for cheating the captain, who was a very good man, and requested the Lord to grant liberation to the captain as he was utilizing the captain’s money in the service of the Lord.

Thirumangai-azhwar took the money from the captain of the Ship in a tricky way and started preparations to steal the golden idol along with his associates. The gang prepared a detailed plan after surveying everything and hid in the precincts of the temple one evening and started to execute their plan in the middle of the night to avoid unnecessary attention.

They lifted the stone pavement under the water that falls from Gomukhi and located the lever, which was the key to opening the secret mechanized entrance that was craftily hidden on the top of the temple. They disconnected the secret chain that was connected to the lever and the small door that was covering the crown of the temple automatically opened. Thirumangai-azhwar went to the top of the temple and could see the marvelously sculpted idol of Lord Buddha.

As the entrance was very small, Thirumangai-azhwar slowly lowered Yatirasan into the sanctum sanctorum with the help of a rope and asked him to fetch the golden idol. The idol started revolving whenever Yatirasan tried to catch hold of it making it impossible for Yatirasan to hold the idol. Being knowledgeable in the art of temple construction and installation of the Deities, Thirumangai-azhwar asked his brother-in-law, Yatirasan, to spit at the pedestal on which the idol was installed as that would desecrate the sanctum, and the mantras that were invoked at the time of installing the idol would stop working. Yatirasan did as told by Thirumangai-azhwar and the idol stopped rotating by itself. Yatirasan managed to send the golden idol to the top with the help of a rope. However, he could not come out of the entrance as it seemed to have mysteriously contracted and Yatirasan’s frame seemed to be too big to pass through that entrance.

Thirumangai-azhwar and his associates tried every possible means to get Yatirasan out of the temple and all their efforts to break the wall to extend the

entrance failed. Thirumangai-azhwar became concerned as dawn was approaching and it was impossible to carry the huge golden statue out of the town after daybreak as there was every possibility of people noticing the burglary and catching them if they continued to stay there.

Moreover, if Yatirasan was allowed to stay inside the sanctum sanctorum people might catch him and eventually catch them after extracting the details from Yatirasan or after identifying him rendering all their hard work useless. Yatirasan, who realized the impending crisis, requested Thirumangai-azhwar to behead him and carry his head along with the statue to avoid getting recognized.

Thirumangai-azhwar started to lament as he was not willing to behead Yatirasan. In his efforts to convince Thirumangai-azhwar to behead him, Yatirasan once again said, “Being an exemplary saint and a great philosopher, you should not grieve like an ordinary man. By killing me you will give me a chance to sacrifice my life for the cause of the Lord and one who dies in the Lord’s service attains Vaikuntha. Therefore, you will be doing me a favor by beheading me. This body itself is a prison that prevents one from attaining the eternal world and communion with the Lord. Therefore, please behead me without any delay and further your cause of completing the construction of the temple following the Lord’s order.”

Thirumangai-azhwar said, “If anyone deserves to go to Vaikuntha it is you,” and beheaded Yatirasan with one fling of his axe without hesitating any further. Yatirasan’s body fell into the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and Thirumangai-azhwar and his associates fled the scene with Yatirasan’s head and the golden idol. They placed Yatirasan’s head on top of the idol and decorated it to resemble a dead body. They carried it through Nagapattinam as if they were carrying a dead body for burial and crossed Nagapattinam without arousing any suspicion. Thirumangai-azhwar carefully hid Yatirasan’s head in the forest and started to flee along with the idol and his associates.

It is told that in the endeavor of stealing the Lord Buddha Statue from the Nagapattinam temple Yatirasan struck inside the temple without any option and at the request of Yatirasan that Thirumangai-azhwar cut off his head to give him liberation. But, Mahalakshmi, consort of Supreme Lord Narayana could not withstand the beheading of Yatirasan and she intervened requesting the Lord to revive Yatirasan and to stop testing Thirumangai-azhwar, who was struggling to carry out the Lord’s order and did not even care to behead Yatirasan, who was very dear to him besides being his brother-in-law. The Lord was moved by mother Lakshmi’s entreaties and asked His beloved servant Garuda to lift Yatirasan’s body from the sanctum sanctorum of the desecrated temple and breathe life into it by joining it with its severed head. Garuda did as told by the Lord and, thus, Yatirasan was given a new lease on life.

Garuda carried Yatirasan to the place where Thirumangai-azhwar was resting along with his associates and told him about the Lord’s order to revive Yatirasan before vanishing. Thirumangai-azhwar and his associates began to dance and celebrate Yatirasan’s revival. However, Yatirasan having lost his desire to live further was aspiring to attain liberation. He started to lament, “I might have committed a lot of sins to have come back to this material world after sacrificing my life in the service of the Lord. My dreams of attaining the final beatitude and Vaikuntha have been thwarted by the Lord Himself.” Thirumangai-azhwar consoled Yatirasan and continued his journey.

Thirumangai-azhwar and Yatirasan were on their journey along with their gang and did not rest till they reached a place called Thirukkananguди from Nagapattinam. The village watchman, who was guarding the fields in the night, recognized Thirumangai-azhwar when he reached the outskirts of the village and started to follow him. Noticing it he asked the watchman not to follow them. The watchman told Thirumangai-azhwar that the village did not have a safe drinking water source and the villagers had to travel to a distant well to fetch drinking water.

He requested Thirumangai-azhwar to do something about it. Thirumangai-azhwar picked up a stone and hurled it at some distance and said, “there lies your drinking water, go and fetch it.” The watchman ran to the spot where the stone fell and to his surprise saw water oozing out of the ground. He tasted the water and it was very sweet. The watchman fell at Thirumangai-azhwar’s feet and profusely thanked him for identifying the drinking water source for the village. Thirumangai-azhwar continued his journey.

The water source identified by Thirumangai-azhwar has never dried up since then and the people of the village continue to fetch their drinking water from it even to this day.

On his way back from Nagapattinam with Lord Buddha’s gold idol, Thirumangai-azhwar, and his associates reached a place called Agrahara, the sun began to rise and they had to hide the golden idol to conceal their tracks. Thirumangai-azhwar noticed a field that was neatly plowed and prepared for planting paddy and hid the idol in the field. To their misfortune, the owner of the field came with his men to plant paddy saplings in the field.

Thirumangai-azhwar sensing that the owner of the field might find out about the hidden idol, started a fight with the owner along with his associates claiming that the field belonged to him. The owner started to say that he had records to prove that the land belonged to him and it was inherited from his ancestors and the argument continued for a long time.

Thirumangai-azhwar suggested that the dispute be settled in the village council on the following day and requested the owner to come with the necessary papers to stake his claim over the field. The owner of the field agreed to Thirumangai-azhwar’s proposal and went back to the village to summon the council. Thirumangai-azhwar and his associates loitered around the village till nightfall and fled from the scene along with the idol leaving the field to its owner.

On his way back from Nagapattinam with Lord Buddha’s gold idol, Thirumangai-azhwar finally reached Uttamar Kovil and hid the idol in a safe place before proceeding to Sri-Rangam. Thirumangai-azhwar summoned the architects and started to plan the construction work. By then, the people of Nagapattinam noticed the burglary and were shocked. They formed a few teams to track the thieves and set out to accomplish their tasks.

In their efforts to trace the thieves, one of the teams reached Agrahara to see if they could find any clues about the thieves. The owner of the field in which Thirumangai-azhwar had hidden the idol told the team about the gang which claimed the ownership of his field and vanished without even attending the

village council to stake their claim. The team picked up that clue and traced Thirumangai-azhwar.

They accused him of committing the burglary and Thirumangai-azhwar denied it outrightly. The people of Nagapattinam asked Thirumangai-azhwar to promise in the name of Lord Ranganatha to prove his innocence. Thirumangai-azhwar was not willing to promise in the name of the Lord and he said, “We cannot invoke the name of the Lord for such petty things. We do not want the idol, to come back after one year and we will return even the small finger, and if you want we will give this in writing.”

As the people of Nagapattinam did not have any other option they left taking the promissory note given by Thirumangai-azhwar. Thirumangai-azhwar melted the golden idol and sold it to generate funds for the construction of the temple. He started the construction work with the help of many architects and artisans.

Thirumangai-azhwar was so engrossed in the construction work that he did not notice the year-end. The people of Nagapattinam came in large numbers to take the idol expecting Thirumangai-azhwar to keep his promise. Thirumangai-azhwar cut his little finger and threw it before them and asked them to carry it. Thirumangai-azhwar said, “I had promised to give you even the little finger and I have given it. Now don’t disturb me and allow me to complete the temple work.” The people of Nagapattinam had no choice but to leave the scene without uttering a word.

In this way, by the divine influence of Lord Ranganatha, Thirumangai-azhwar completed his service to the Lordship by renovating the temple of Sri Rangam, which was renovated by various kings at various times. That’s why Lord Ranganatha is known as “Purushothama Kruthasthana – One who resides in the place, which was built by the great kings.”

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Holy Name 91: Bhooloka-jana Bhagyadha

Mantra: Om Bhooloka-jana Bhagyadhaya namah

Meaning – One who is the Supreme fortune for the people of an earthly planet or One who bestows the Supreme fortune to the people of an earthly planet

Pastime – Kurugai Kaavalappan, the only disciple of Natha Muni among many disciples learned Yogarahasya (Mystic Yoga Practice) from Natha Muni, which was bestowed to him by Nammazhwar. Alavanthar, the grandson of Natha Muni, came to Kuruvaalappan Koil as directed by his preceptor Manakkaal Nambi seeking initiation of Yoga Rahasya from Kurugai Kaavalappan. Yoga Rahasya is a secret mantra that empowers one to experience the Lord of Vaikunta.

When he reached the place of Kurugai Kaavalappan, who was in a yogic state sitting at the Brindavanam in the North-East corner of the temple. Not wanting to disturb him, Alavanthar stood outside, but to his surprise, Kurugai Kaavalappan asked if someone from the ‘Sottai clan’ (Alavanthar belonged to this clan) had come there. Kurugai Kaavalappan explained that the Lord tried to glance through his shoulders and hence he realized that it had to be someone from Natha Muni’s clan for the Lord to show such interest.

Kurugai Kaavalappan asked Alavanthar to revisit on full moon Poosam day in the Tamil calendar month of Thai for initiation of the Yoga Rahasya as that was the day the former was going to attain the Lord's lotus feet. Alavanthar noted the date and was completely happy and left for Sri Rangam waiting for the particular day.

During this period, Alavanthar in Sri Rangam witnessed Araiyar Sevai (Singing Azhwars Pashuramas for the pleasure of Lord Ranganatha) which had been started there by his Grand Father, Natha Muni. During then, Lord Ranganatha wants to trick Alavanthar, so when he listening to the Pashuram at the Ranganathaswamy shrine, he listened to the presentation of Anantha Pura Nagar Paasuram during the Era Pathu Thiruvoimozhi festival. He became mesmerized by yet another reclining deity of the Supreme Lord at Ananathpuram, which is the abode of Lord Padmanabha in Kerala. An excited Alavanthar moved on to visit Anantha Padmanabhaswamy at Thiruvananthapuram.

It was there that he realized that it was the day of his scheduled appointment with Kurugai Kaavalappan for the initiation of Yoga Rahasya. Alavanthar wondered if he could get a Pushpaka Vimana like Lord Rama to immediately land at Kurugai Kaavalappan Koil. But alas, it was not to be. Thus he lost out on an important meeting with Kurugai Kaavalappan. This turned out to be a significant 'non-event' in the history of Vaishnava Sampradaya as Yoga Rahasya (that was only with Natha Muni and Kurugai Kaavalappan) was lost to the future generations and went into oblivion.

Alavanthar became completely upset and rushed to the place of Kurugai Kaavalappan from Thiruvananthapuram, to his dismay Kurugai Kaavalappan already left the world and reached the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha on the same day evening, which he informed Alavanthar to come. Alavanthar with anger arrived at Sri Rangam and asked Lord Ranganatha, why he did like this? For which, Lord Ranganatha said, "Oh Alavanthar! It is my wish that you will not get that Yoga Rahasya. Because in this age of Kali, the living entities can reach the supreme abode by the process of Surrender to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord and his confidential servants, mere practice of Yoga in the form of bodily exercise will mislead and divert the people from the actual goal of life. So I am in the form of Anantha Padmanabhaswamy attracted you and took you there. You don't worry much about this, keep propagating the process of Bhakti and surrender, that is the only thing that will save the people of this planet, that will bring a supreme fortune of liberation to the people of this world." By stating this, Lord Ranganatha pacified his dear devotee, Alavanthar, who intern understood his mistake and continued to propagate the devotion and surrender principles to the people. This was taken to greater heights by Sri Ramanuja, the successor of Alavanthar.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Bhooloka-jana Bhagyadha – One who is the Supreme fortune for the people of an earthly planet or One who bestows the Supreme fortune to the people of an earthly planet," in this case, Supreme Lord Ranganatha makes sure that, he eliminated the other aspects which will mislead the people of this world from the supreme fortune, which is the devotion to his lotus feet and liberation from material entanglement, and bestowed them with the proper path to progress.

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Holy Name 92: Ajnana-dhamana Jyothish

Mantra: Om Ajnana-dhamana Jyothishe namah

Meaning – One who is with the light of knowledge destroys the ignorance

Pastime – Swami Nanjeeyar lived in the city of Thirunarayanapuram, near Mysore in Karnataka. He grew up in the town of Kankorai. Swami Nanjeeyar's original name was Madhava Acharya. Since he had an outstanding knowledge of the Vedantas, he was called a Vedanti. He was renowned as an Acharya in the Advaitic tradition initially. Sri Ramanuja before leaving this world called Parasara Bhattar and told him about Vedanti and asked that Parasara Bhattar correct him and bring him into the Vaishnava fold. This shows the greatness of Swami Nanjeeyar. Sri Ramanuja had already done a similar act with the Advaiti Yajnamurti, who was renamed Arulala Perumal Emperumanar. However, due to old age, Sri Ramanuja was unable to do the same with Madhava Acharya and therefore gave the task to Parasara Bhattar.

As Vedanti, Swami Nanjeeyar lived with great fame in Thirunarayanapuram. Once a Vaishnava from Sri Rangam met him and told him about Parasara Bhattar's greatness. From that time on, Vedanti was eager to meet Parasara Bhattar. When the Vaishnava met Parasara Bhattar and told him about the incident, Parasara Bhattar asked him what he told Vedanti. The Vaishnava replied that he told Vedanti that Parasara Bhattar knew all scriptures. Parasara Bhattar then told the Brahmin that he should have told Vedanti that Parasara Bhattar also knew Thirunedunthandagam, the Composition of Thirumangai Azhwar. The next time the Vaishnava met Vedanti he repeated that to him. Vedanti was then wondering about this work that he had not come across before.

One of the highlights of Parasara Bhattar’s life is, he is going to Thirunarayanapuram (Melukote) and his debate with a Scholar. It was Lord Ranganatha’s divine order that Advaithi Scholar Madhava Acharya should be reformed. Parasara Bhattar takes the blessings of Lord Ranganatha, who intern bestowed him with sufficient knowledge and potency for the task, goes all the way to Thirunarayanapuram (Melukote) in his palanquin with the grand procession of Vaishnavas to debate with Advaithi Madhava Acharya on the Philosophy. Eventually, Parasara Bhattar was stopped and suggested that going with a grand procession will not be favorable as the disciples of Advaithi Madhava Acharya will stop him and just delay him from meeting him forever. So Parasara Bhattar changes to a very simple attire and goes to the Prasadam serving hall of Advaithi Madhava Acharya. The Hall is maintained by Advaithi Madhava Acharya for serving the people food, so no one will go hungry in the village that is the dedication of Advaithi Madhava Acharya in the terms of serving the devotees and Brahmanas.

When Parasara Bhattar visited the hall of Advaithi Madhava Acharya, he waits there without eating and the news has taken to Advaithi Madhava Acharya taking note of it, Advaithi Madhava Acharya comes to him and asks him why he does not eat and what he wants. Parasara Bhattar says he wants to debate with him. Advaithi Madhava Acharya having heard about Parasara Bhattar before quickly realizes this to Parasara Bhattar that since no one will have the guts to challenge him, he engages with Parasara Bhattar for a debate. Parasara Bhattar first uses Thirunedunthantakam to establish the Supremacy of Lord Vishnu and subsequently presents all the meanings from the scriptures. Advaithi Madhava

Acharya accepts the defeat and falls at the lotus feet of Parasara Bhattar and accepts him as Acharya. Parasara Bhattar gives him specific instructions and teaches him etiquettes of Vaishnava Sampradaya and initiates him with Vaishnava Diksha and gives him the name Ranganatha, later he got the name Nanjeeyar. Later, Nanjeeyar became his successor.

Then Parasara Bhattar takes leave from him and goes to Sri Rangam on the day before the start of Adhyayana Utsava (The Grand Festival of Sri Rangam Temple). There is a grand welcome arranged in Sri Rangam for Parasara Bhattar. Parasara Bhattar goes to the shrine of Lord Ranganatha and he narrates in front of the Lord, the whole incident between Advaithi Madhava Acharya and him. And Lord Ranganatha being very pleased orders Parasara Bhattar to recite Thirunedunthantagam and this is made a custom ever after that in Sri Rangam – the Adhyayana utsava in Sri Rangam starts with the recital of Thirundenthantagam.

Once after getting defeated by Parasara Bhattar, Madhava Acharya practiced Vaishnavism in Thirunarayanapuram. Madhava Acharya, getting frustrated with his wives, who are unfavorable of his services. Once a few Vaishnavas came to his house and his wives sent them away without food. Upon returning to his house and hearing the news, Madhava Acharya grew greatly dejected with his wives in their failure to feed the poor. He was also unable to bear the separation from his Spiritual Master Parasara Bhattar and decided to become a Sannyasi and goes to Sri Rangam to be with his Spiritual Master Parasara Bhattar. He divides his huge wealth into three parts, and gives two parts to each of his two wives, it is told in the scriptures that wives should be taken care of before accepting Sannyasa Ashrama and he accepts Sannyasa and begins his journey to Sri Rangam. On his way, Ananthazhwan meets him and asks him about the need for taking Sannyasa. He says if he goes to Parasara Bhattar and simply serves, Lord Narayana will give liberation anyway. Ananthazhwan blesses Madhava Acharya to get the mercy of Lord Narayana and Goddess Lakshmi and their services and gives him the Mantra Diksha in Lord's holy name. Parasara Bhattar sees Madhava Acharya in Sri Rangam and his dedication accepts him and calls him with great affection "You are Nam Jeeyar" and then onwards he becomes to be known as Nanjeeyar. After Parasara Bhattar ascended to Sri Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu, Swami Nanjeeyar took over the leadership of the entire Vaishnava clan in Sri Rangam and worship of Lord Ranganatha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Ajnana-dhamana Jyothish – One who is with the light of knowledge destroys the ignorance," in this case, as per the desire of Lord Ranganatha, he destroyed the ignorance of Advaiti Madhava Acharya with the transcendental knowledge and transformed him as his devotee and gave the responsibility of Sri Vaishnava clan.

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Holy Name 93: Arjuna-priya Sarathi

Mantra: Om Arjuna-priya Sarathaye namah

Meaning – One who is the dear charioteer of Arjuna

Pastime – When Lord Caitanya was traveling in South India he arrived at the biggest temple in the world, Ranganatha temple,

He went to see the Deity, and He saw one brahmana was reading Bhagavad-gita.

And people were joking with him, ‘Oh, Mr. Brahmana, how you are reading Bhagavad-gita?’

Because they were neighbors, they knew that this brahmana was illiterate, and he was studying Bhagavad-gita. So they were joking.

But the brahmana did not care about them.

He was taking the book and in his own way, he was reading.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu saw this incident. He came to the brahmana.

He asked the brahmana, ‘My dear brahmana, what you are reading?’

The brahmana could understand, ‘This person is not joking with me; he is serious.’

So he explained, ‘My dear sir, I am reading Bhagavad-gita. Unfortunately, I am illiterate. I do not know even the alphabet.’

‘Why you are reading Bhagavad-gita?’

So he said, ‘My spiritual master knows that I am illiterate, but still, he has asked me to read Bhagavad-gita. What can I do? Therefore I have taken this book. I am seeing simple pictures... I do not know how to read.

‘Oh, that’s all right. You cannot read it. But I see that you are crying. How you are crying if you are not reading?’

‘Yes, I am crying. Of course, there is a cause.’ ‘What is that?’

‘As soon as I take this Bhagavad-gita, I remember Krishna. Krishna is sitting as a driver and Arjuna is hearing.

I am going from the beginning to the end of the book and then I am simply crying looking at pictures of Arjuna and Krishna.

I cry remembering how the Supreme Lord loves his devotees. He has become a servant of his devotee. Is it not that amazing?

I have heard the story. I know something about the instruction but cannot read them.

So as soon as I take this book, this picture comes before me and I simply think how Krsna is nice that He has become a charioteer of His devotee. He is so great. Still, He has accepted a menial service of His devotee. This gives me so much pleasure that I cry.’

Caitanya Mahaprabhu embraced him, ‘Your Bhagavad-gita reading is perfect. You have taken the essence.’

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Krishna himself, is known as “Arjuna-priya Sarathi – One who is the dear charioteer of Arjuna,” in this case, the Brahamana, who is an adherent devotee of Lord Ranganatha, was thinking of Lord Krishna, who is none other than Lord Ranganatha, mercifully driving the chariot of Arjuna, his devotee. And Supreme Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is none other than Lord Krishna in the disguise of the devotee, appreciated and blessed the devotion of the Brahamana.

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Holy Name 94: Chandra Pushkarani-natha

Mantra: Om Chandra Pushkarani-nathaya namah

Meaning – One who is the lord of Chandra Pushkarani (Sri Rangam Temple Pond)

Pastime – According to legend, the moon god, Chandra, was born three times, which is why he also came to be known as Trijanmi. The first time, he was created by Brahma, and the second time, he emerged from the eyes of Sage Atri. Chandra’s radiance became so powerful and intolerable that he was immersed in an ocean of milk to ensure the world’s survival. During another event, which involved the churning of the ocean by the asuras and the devas, Chandra was reborn and released, along with Goddess Lakshmi. Chandra came to be known as Lakshmi’s brother.

Among his 27 wives, Daksha’s daughters, Chandra was especially fond of his fourth wife, Rohini, and spent most of his time with her. The other wives resented his indifference to them and complained about it to their father. Daksha immediately cursed Chandra. ‘May your powers decline with the passing of each day,’ he said, losing his temper as usual.

Now the daughters regretted telling Daksha what they had. Their intention was not to punish Chandra—all they wanted was his attention. What if their husband simply disappeared one day along with his powers?

Chandra begged Daksha to take the curse back. But once a curse is uttered, no one can revoke it. ‘I am sorry, son,’ Daksha said. ‘There is nothing that I can do now. Perhaps if you pray to Shiva, he may help you.’ Accordingly, he prayed to Shiva at Prabhas Tirtha (Present-day Somanath), due to which he was able to adore the head of Shiva, but not able to get completely rid of his sins. On the advice of Lord Shiva, he started to visit the holy places of Lord Vishnu.

As told by Lord Shiva, Chandra started to visit Lord Vishnu’s holy abode like Venkatachala, where he took his dip in the holy tirthas and got the blessings of the Lord, still, to further purify himself he travels to various holy places and finally arrives at Sesha Peetam (Present-day Sri Rangam region), that time Lord Ranganatha yet not arrived. But, the holy Sesha Peetam was the residence of many saintly people and sages, there they use to do penances. Chandra also started engaging in the penances by taking a dip in the holy pond there, pleased by the penances Lord Vishnu appeared and told him, he was very pleased by his penances, he will get rid of his curse at yet another place, where he will give his darshan to him and save him. The Holy pond at Sesha Peetam where he took bath and engaged in penance to please him will get the name Chandra Pushakarini. In the future, he will arrive there and make his residence at Sesha

Peetam as Lord Ranganatha at the shore of Chandra Pushakarini. By stating this, Lord instructed him to proceed to a place known as Mayavaram or Mayura (Present-day Mayiladuthurai region)."

As per the command of Lord Vishnu, Chandra arrived at Mayavaram and started to engage in the penances by taking a dip in a pond nearby, as Lord Vishnu already mentioned, he gave darshan to Lord Ranganatha in the reclining posture, liberated Chandra from the curse. Yet again the pond, where Chandra took his dip and engaged in the penances got the name Chandra Pushkarini. As per the request of Chandra and other sages, Lord Ranganatha stayed there at the shore of Chandra Pushkarini along with his eternal consort, Goddess Ranganayaki (Chandrasaapa Vimochanavalli), the abode also got the name Tiruindalur, Indu means moon and the place Tiruindalur derives its name from the legend. And also, When Lord Ranganatha appeared there was a great and beautiful fragrance emitted from his transcendental body, and the entire region was surcharged with that, due to which Lord Ranganatha got the name Lord Sri Parimala Ranganatha. Later, Lord Ranganatha worshipped by Brahma to Lord Rama, arrived at Sesha Peetam (Present Day Sri Rangam Region) and resided at the shore of Chandra Pushkarini.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Chandra Pushkarani-natha – One who is the lord of Chandra Pushkarani (Sri Rangam or Tiruindalur Temple Pond)," Lord Ranganatha who resides at the shore of Chandra Pushkarani in Sri Rangam and Tiruindalur, being the Lord of that holy Pushkarani.

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Holy Name 95: Chandadhi Dwarapalaka

Mantra: Om Chandadhi Dwarapalakaya namah

Meaning – One who has several guards at the gate like Chanda

Pastime – One day, four Kumaras, named Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanatkumara, arrived at the entrance of Vaikuntha, or the residence of Lord Vishnu at the ocean of Milk. By virtue of their tapas or austerities, they appeared to be children but, in reality, they were very old and spiritually advanced. Tempted by the world inside, they walked towards the gates. As they were about to enter the spiritual realm, they were stopped by Jaya and Vijaya, the dwarapalakas or gatekeepers of Vaikuntha. Considering the children, Jaya and Vijaya arrogantly declared that they could not be allowed inside the abode of Vishnu. They inform the Kumaras that Vishnu could not be disturbed as he was resting. The duo was unaware that these four Kumaras happened to be the mind-born sons or manasaputras of Brahma.

The Kumaras challenged Jaya and Vijaya's words by saying that they were devotees and that Vishnu is always available for his devotees. Enraged by the slight, they cursed the twin gatekeepers to lose their divinity and take birth in the material world. On being cursed, Jaya and Vijaya let go of their arrogance and pleaded with the Kumaras to revoke the curse. Hearing the commotion, Vishnu enquired. Learning about this incident, Vishnu left his abode to sort out the issue. All present at the gate bowed as Vishnu appeared at the entrance.

Vishnu turned to his gatekeepers and told them that the curse of a Kumara could not be revoked. Instead, he could modify the curse. He gave them two options;

either they could be born seven times as devotees of Vishnu, or three times as enemies of Vishnu. Either way, Vishnu would be a part of their mortal lives. Jaya and Vijaya could not stand the thought of being away from their master for seven lives, so they agreed to be born thrice as his enemies. After fulfilling the curse, they could return to their immortal forms as his gatekeepers.

In the Satya Yuga, Jaya and Vijaya were born as the asuras Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyaksha was slain by the Varaha avatar of Vishnu, and Hiranyakashipu was slain Vishnu’s Narasimha avatar. In the Treta Yuga, they were born as the brothers Ravana and Kumbarkarna. They were both destroyed by Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu. In the Dwapara Yuga, they took birth as Shishupala and Dantavakra. They were both defeated by Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu.

From authoritative sources, it is learned that Jaya and Vijaya were sent to this material world to fulfill the Lord's desire to fight. The Lord also sometimes wants to fight, but who can fight with the Lord but is a very confidential devotee of the Lord? Jaya and Vijaya descended to this world to fulfill the Lord's desire. Therefore in each of their three births -- first as Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu, second as Ravana and Kumbhakarna, and third as Sisupala and Dantavakra -- the Lord personally killed them. In other words, these associates of the Lord, Jaya, and Vijaya, descended to the material world to serve the Lord by fulfilling His desire to fight.

The depiction of Jaya and Vijaya guarding the gates of the temples, which is none different from Vaikuntha loka is a common feature of most Vishnu temples, showing how inseparable they are from their lord. Actually Lord Vishnu has many gates and many gatekeepers, Canda and Pracanda are the keepers of the east gate, Bhadra and Subhadra are keepers of the south, Jaya and Vijaya of the west, and Dhatri and Vidhatri are the protectors of the Northern gate. Sometimes, it is mentioned that even Canda and Pracanda also cursed by Goddess Lakshmi for their behavior of not allowing Lakshmi, according to the curse, they both appeared as demons as in the case of Jaya and Vijaya, Lord enacted some pastimes via them and later they re-instated to their position.

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Chandadhi Dwarapalaka – One who has several guards at the gate like Chanda,” usually seven doors for the abode of Lord Vishnu in the ocean of milk, there these doorkeepers headed by Canda and Pracanda, etc… serving the Lordship. Similarly, in Sri Rangam, which is known as Bhooloka Vaikuntam, the abode of Lord Vishnu on the earth, the seven doors and all these doorkeepers serve the Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Vishnu, appeared to the Lord Brahma, when he did his penances at the shore of the milk ocean. Further, Sri Vedanta Desikan states in his Dasavatara stotram composition that, the same Vishnu, who appeared as Lord Ranganatha is the source of all the ten incarnations. Yet another version states that the abode of Lord Vishnu visited by Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanatkumara, is the shrine of Lord Ranganatha during the Lord’s stay in Satyaloka, the abode of Brahma.

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Holy Name 96: Kumdhadhi Parivara

Mantra: Om Kumdhadhi Parivaraya namah

Meaning – One who has several entourages like Kumudha and others

Pastime – Lord Ranganatha, who was worshipped by Brahma and later by all the kings in Surya Dynasty till Lord Rama, arrived at Sesha Peetam (Present-day Sri Rangam Region) which is at the shore of Chandra Pushakarini, and he was being worshipped by great kings and devotees.

And the Supreme abode of Lord Ranganatha, Sri Rangam, is also protected by Kumuda, Kumudaksha, Pundarika, Vamana, Sankukarna, Sarvanetra, Sumukha, and Supratisthita, they are all the protectors of the directions of the Sri Rangam town. The couples beginning with Kumuda and Kumudaksha are protectors of the intermediate directions beginning from the southeast.

Even though the temple was firmly protected by Supreme Lord Ranganatha's servants, still over time, after the disappearance of Azhwars, their compositions were completely lost and the worship and glory of the Lord were not propagated. Lord Ranganatha wished to bring out the compositions of Azhwars for the upliftment of living entities and also orders his servants or entourages headed by Gajaanana, Kumuda, etc… to appear in the world as human beings (devotees) and get back the divine compositions of Azhwars and also establish and propagate his glories.

Gajaanana, an associate of Vishwaksena (commander-in-chief of Lord Vishnu's army), appeared as Ranganatha, who later on became popular as Natha Muni, was born in Sottai Kulam at Vira Narayanapuram. He is the first associate who appeared on the order of Lord Ranganatha to re-establish the Vaishnava clan propagated by Azhwars. Further, propagate the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya.

Accordingly, Nathamuni once went on a pilgrimage to Kumbakonam and visited Lord Aravamudan's temple. Some devotees were singing Nammazhwar's hymns before the Lord and in the end, they sang the Phala-Shruti, which reads, "We dedicate these ten hymns from the thousand sung by Kurugur Sadagopan to thee." Nathamuni was captivated by the philosophy and the diction enshrined in those hymns. He requested the devotees to teach him all the thousand hymns composed by Nammazhwar and the devotees expressed their ignorance about the remaining 990 hymns. Seeing Natha Muni's determination to learn the hymns, they asked him to inquire at Kurugur, the birthplace of Nammazhwar. To his dismay, the people of Kurugur had completely forgotten about Nammazhwar as he had left the planet thousands of years before Natha Muni.

Nathamuni's quest for Nammazhwar's works led him to a very old man called Parankusha Dasa. He too expressed his ignorance about Nammazhwar's works but taught him Kannin-siruthambu, the eleven hymns composed by Madhurakavi Azhwar in praise of his spiritual master, Nammazhwar. Parankusha Dasa told Natha Muni that his forefathers used to tell him that Nammazhwar would personally teach all the hymns composed by him to the person who chants Kannin-siruthambu 12,000 times with devotion before Nammazhwar's Deity at Kurugur. Parankusha Dasa also told Natha Muni that people used to go into a trance just by devotedly singing Kannin-siruthambu and getting Nammazhwar's mercy. Natha Muni was so madly in love with Nammazhwar's hymns that he resolved to chant Kannin-siruthambu till Nammazhwar showered his mercy on him by teaching the 1,000 hymns.

Nammazhwar, who is an incarnation of Vishwaksena (commander-in-chief of Lord Vishnu's army), spoke to Natha Muni in his Deity form and taught Natha Muni all the works composed by him. Nammazhwar was so impressed with Natha Muni that he requested all the other Azhwars to teach their works to Natha Muni and the other Azhwars complied. Thus, Natha Muni revived all the works of the Azhwars with the help of Nammazhwar. Natha Muni returned to Vira Narayanapuram and started to classify and codify the works of the Azhwars before teaching them to interested devotees.

Nathamuni learned all the 4000 Divya Prabandhams from Nammalwar himself at Azhwar Thirunagai and returned to his place Kattu Mannar Kovil. He recited the entire Divya Prabandhams in front of the deity in the temple of Kattu Mannar Kovil, Lord Mannanar (Narayana), and received all honors from Lord Narayana. Further, he taught them to his disciples. After this, Natha Muni became in charge of Sri Rangam temple, and as desired by Lord Ranganatha, he establishes and propagates the compositions of Azhwars and the glory of Lord Ranganatha.

Nathamuni (associate of Vishwaksena), handed over the responsibility of the entire Vaishnava clan and Azhwars compositions to his dear disciple, Pundarikaksha (Incarnation of Kumudan, the protector of the Lord's abode). Initially, Nathamuni wants to hand over the complete knowledge of Yogarahasya to him, but he promptly declined to receive it. Because it will not be suitable for the people of Kali Yuga. Keeping this in mind he accepted only the divine Divya Prabandhams (Azhwars compositions). This is very much appreciated by Nathamuni, who named him Uyyakkondar - Saviour of the new dispensation. Nathamuni also handed him the important responsibility of teaching Yamuncharya, the grandson of Nathamuni. Uyyakkondar also accepted the responsibility and promised the Nathamuni, his guru.

Uyakkondar had five prominent students, of whom Manarkal Nambi (also known as Rama Mishra) was the most popular and important to Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya. Manarkal Nambi, who is an incarnation of Kumudaksha, the protector of the Lord's abode, accepted the responsibility from his guru, Uyakkondar, which is the propagation of Azhwars compositions, the upliftment of Sri Vaishnava Clan, bringing Yamunacharya back to the track, etc…

Alavandar (Yamunacharya), who is an incarnation of Harivakktra, one of the protectors of the Lord's abode, appeared as a grandson of Nathamuni. At a young age, with his knowledge in Tarka and Nyayya, he defeated the court minister of the royal assembly and occupied the throne of King. He enjoyed the material royal happiness for many years has a King. But, when he was changed by his Guru Manakal Nambi, as per the desire of his predecessors Nathamuni and Uyakkondar, Yamunacharya was dragged back to his spiritual life, which is in his gene. Later, Yamunacharya went in to become the greatest saint in Vaishnavism, his works, and knowledge his incomparable and his family lineage itself speaks for it. In his time, the Azhwar compositions spread far and wide further establishing the Lord's glories, and Sri Rangam became the capital of the entire Sri Vaishnava clan. He had many disciples, who are all his associates and also the protectors of the Lord's abode, they incarnated and became disciples of Yamunacharya for the propagation of the Lord's glories and Azhwar compositions. Later, the same is overtaken by Sri Ramanuja (Incarnation of Lord's serpent bed, Adishesha) and remains in history, how Sri Ramanuja has taken the instructions of Yamunacharya to his heart and worked on it and spreads the Vaishnavism far and wide. During and after Sri Ramanuja several

associates of the Supreme Lord appeared for the propagation of Vaishnavism far and wide, especially the Azhwar compositions. All of them made their base in Sri Rangam at the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha.

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Kumdhadhi Parivara – One who has several entourages like Kumudha and others,” in this case, the entire entourage of the Lord, not only protecting the abode of the Lord, when it is needed, they all appeared on the earth and established the supremacy of Supreme Lord Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 97: Pandya-saroopyadhayaka

Mantra: Om Pandya-saroopyadhayakaya namah

Meaning – One who made Pandya King realize his constitutional position (that is servitorship to Supreme Lord)

Pastime – Sundara Pandiyan was the most powerful Pandiyan king. The offerings he submitted to Sri Rangam temple are unmatched. The glory and fame of his offerings reached too far-reaching lands. Sadayavaraman Sundara Pandiyan has a special place in Sri Ranganatha’s heart. While offerings thousands of services to the temple of Sri Rangam.

Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandiyan donated 18 lakh gold coins to the Sri Rangam temple. The story of how he arrived at this figure is interesting. He had a huge balance made, in which the scales resembled boats. He set the boats afloat, and on one boat he put an elephant, and sat on it, with his armor and weapons. On the other side, he put gold coins, pearls, and precious stones, until the scales were balanced. He then donated the gold, pearls, and gems to the temple. This is his style of offering, this was going on for several years.

Once Sundara Pandiyan sat in Thulabaram multiple times and collected huge wealth which he wanted to submit to Lord Ranganatha. Lord Ranganatha rejected a huge amount of wealth being submitted as King felt that it was his effort. Has a supreme autocrat, he can decide whether to accept service or not, But, here Lord is doing this pastime to show the greatness of Sundara Pandiyan to the World and to give him and others in the future the proper vision of service.

The entire wealth was lying outside Aryapatal Vasal (in Garuda Mandapam) for 2 years. It was not amazing that the Lord never bothered. The entire Sri Rangam residents never considered even touching a gram of it. Those days’ temple servants and devotees hardly would have any income despite that determination not to touch the rejected wealth must be considered. Yet another version states that it is not King Sundara Pandiyan, it is the wealth of the King of Bengal, who wished to offer the things to Lord Ranganatha with ego.

After King understood his mistake by the mercy of Lord Ranganatha that it was not his effort due to which so much wealth was submitted rather it was Lord Ranganatha’s wealth that he was collecting as a King and submitted to Lord for his personal purification. Further, the entire creation is Supreme Lord Ranganatha’s wealth. When King repented like this, Lord Ranganatha understood the transformation of the King’s heart and ordered his servants to accept the

offerings. Post which the entire wealth was submitted in the temple treasury as per shastras as mentioned in Temple rules.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Pandya-saroopyadhayaka – One who made Pandya King realize his constitutional position (that is servitorship to Supreme Lord),” in this case, Lord Ranganatha not only gave the knowledge or vision to King Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandiyan and also made him understand his constitutional position as the servant of Supreme Lord, even though he is the king of a certain region.

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Holy Name 98: Sapthavarana Samvitha-sadana

Mantra: Om Sapthavarana Samvitha-sadanaya namah

Meaning – One who resides in the temple, which consists of seven compound-walls

Pastime – Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan, the 20th century saint, was born in Sri Rangam, Tamil Nadu. He was born in the great Vaishnava family lineage. In his childhood, he learned Vedic literature related to Vaishnavism and thickly associated it with the activities of Sri Rangam Vaishnava Matha. It was the beauty of character and person and piety, coupled with an extraordinary scholarship, which made Lord Lakshmi Narashima accept his services. Sri Veeraraghava Satakopa Yatindra Maha Desikan, the then seer of Ahobilam Matha, understood his devotion and knowledge of him and desired to make him his successor and for which he agreed after much deliberation. Accordingly, Sri Veeraraghava Satakopa Yatindra Maha Desikan gave Sannyasa initiation to him and named him Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan. Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan ascended as 44th seer of the Matha, after the disappearance of his Guru Sri Veeraraghava Satakopa Yatindra Maha Desikan. He administrated the Matha like his predecessors and propagated Vaishnavism far and wide. He ascended the throne of Ahobilam Matha at the age of 63 and occupied that pontifical position for 35 years and wrote various literature and propagated Vaishnavism across southern India with his influence, and many kings and rulers become his followers.

Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan is a staunch follower and devotee of Lord Ranganatha. Well aware of the glories of Sri Rangam and Supreme Lord Ranganatha was glorified in the Vedic literature and Acharyas like Sri Parasara Bhattar in his Sri Ranganatha Stotram’s Mangalacharana verse, he composed as,

saptha prakara madhye sarasijamuklothbhasamane vimane,
kaveri madhya dese phanipathi sayane, sesha paryanga bhage,
nidhramudhrabhiramam katinikatasira parswavinyastha hastham,
padmadhathree karabhyam parichithacharanam rangarajam bhajeham

Meaning: I salute that Lord of Rangam, who sleeps in the yogic pose, On the bed of Adhisesha, Below the tall dome, which resembles a lotus bud, and is surrounded by seven ramparts (seven compound walls), and which is in between two Kaveri rivers, with his right hand near his crown, and his lotus like merciful left hand, pointing towards his lotus feet which take care of us all.

Keeping this in mind, Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan has taken up the task of renovating the incomplete or damaged structures of Lord Ranganatha's Saptha Prakaram (seven compounds), further other shrines, facilities, etc... By this, he wished to bring back the glory of Sri Rangam according to the description given by the Acharyas. During then he wished to proclaim the glories of Lord Ranganatha by building the Supreme tower for the Supreme temple in the world. This is one of the important services done by Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan, who by building the main temple tower of Sri Rangam, established the Lord's supremacy and which has become one of the important and tallest towers in the country. In the footsteps of his predecessor, Sri Vedanta Desikan, who came to Sri Rangam on the order of Lord Ranganatha and restored all the festivities in Sri Rangam, post destructions by the Islamic invasion. Similarly, Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan appeared in Sri Rangam on the order of Lord Ranganatha and the Lord made him perform the herculean task of building the temple tower, which gave added fame to Sri Rangam. Further, he renovated the other parts of Sri Rangam temple and made Sri Rangam glow as it was.

After compilation of the main temple tower of Sri Rangam with the help of the government, he finalized the auspicious date of inauguration of the tower according to scriptures and invited one and all, importantly to then chief minister Mr. M.G. Ramachandra, who is one of the main support for building the temple tower. During then, the chief minister Mr. M.G. Ramachandra is busy with other programs and he sent back the message to Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan requesting him to postpone the inauguration, so that he can take part, for which Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan not agreed and told that, even if he does not come also the service for Lord Ranganatha will happen by inaugurating the temple tower, if he has time, let him come and participate. After hearing this from Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan, the chief minister Mr. M.G. Ramachandra canceled all other programs and came for the inauguration of the temple tower. In this way, Sri Vedanta Desika Yatindra Maha Desikan showed his love for Lord Ranganatha by not bulging for anyone in the service of the Lord. By this, he has shown a great example for all the devotees of the Lord not to be carried away by the rulers and political diplomacy, but to firmly act for the Lord. Due to his love for Supreme Lord Ranganatha, he took up this great service and completed it. He will be remembered for centuries for this great service.

The seven Prakaram (compounds) of Sri Rangam temple have been named after the kings who built them and each represents a planetary system.

1. Kaliyugaraman Thiruveedi (Bhuloka)

It is the outermost tower and compound, when we enter or see the temple through Rajagopuram (Tall Temple Tower, which was built by Sri Veeraraghava Satakopa Yatindra Maha Desikan) on the southern side, we enter the Kaliyugaraman Thiruveedi. Some gopurams of this 7th prakaram are unfinished. They are called Rayagopuram. The dimensions of their incomplete bases prove that when finished, they would have risen to a height of at least 50 meters.

2. Thiruvikraman Thiruveedi (Bhuvarloka)

The next prakaram is Thiruvikraman Thiruveedi also known as Uthara Street. This 6th enclosure has four gopurams; the eastern gopuram is the most

impressive of all on account of its size and the inscriptions in 13th century characters. The chariots of the Lord are kept in this prakaram.

3. Akalankan Thiruveedi (Swarloka)

Through the Ranga Ranga Gopuram one enters this 5th prakaram. In this enclosure, there is Ranga Vilasa mandapam (hall) on the southern side, the temple of Andal, the temple of Lord Venugopalan, the temple of Sri Chakkarathalwar on the south-west, the temple of Sri Ramanujar on the south-east, the temple of Srimati Ranganayaki Nacchiyar on the north-western side, and the Kamban Mantapa on the northern side. On the eastern side is the Sesharaya Mantapa, 1000 pillared mantapa where the Vaikuntha Ekadashi festivities and the recital of Naalaayira Divya Prabhandam as well as the Araiyar Sevai takes place. This enclosure has the only white gopuram known as Vellai gopura at the eastern entrance to the temple.

4. Alinadan Thiruveed (Maharloka)

The walls of these 4 prakaram were built by Thirumangai Azhwar and hence this prakaram is named after him. Through the Karthikai gopuram, one can enter this 4th enclosure. This enclosure houses one of the biggest mandapam for Garuda. The mandapam has over 200 pillars and is the most beautiful mandapam in the temple. One can also have darshan of the sacred Surya pushkarini near the Garuda
Mantapa.

On the northern side of this enclosure, is the Paramapada vassal, also called the Swarga vassal (the door to Vaikuntha). This door opens only once a year during the Vaikuntha Ekadashi festival. This is the only temple to have a shrine for Lord Dhanavantri among Sri Vaishnava shrines. Beside Sri Dhanavantri shrine, there is the sacred Chandra pushkarini. On the northeastern corner of this enclosure is the temple of Sri Kodanda Rama, Paramapadanathan, Keelapattabhirama, and Lord Srinivasa.

5. Kulashekharan Thiruveedi (Janoloka)

This 3rd prakaram was built by Kulashekhara Azhwar, a great devotee of the Lord. One can enter this 3rd enclosure only through the Arya Bhattal gopuram. This houses several mandapam. Inside this prakaram, one should first have the darshan of Dhwaja Sthamba and Bali Pitha. On the southwest corner of this enclosure, there are temples of Sri Dasamurthy, Sri Hayagriva, and Saraswathi devi. On the northern side are the temples of Sri Senaimudaliyar (Vishwaksena) and Thulukka Nachiyar. On the eastern side is the Arjuna Mantapa.

6. Rajamahendran Thiruveedi (Tapoloka)

The 2nd prakaram, which one enters through the Naazhiketaan entrance is called Rajamahendran street in memory of the Chola king who built it. Large mirrors are placed in the corners for the Lord to see Himself while in procession. In the northwest corner are the Yagashala and the Tondaiman mandapam which are decorated with beautiful paintings. The eastern part contains Arjuna Mantapam and Kili Mantapam.

7. Dharmavarman Thiruveedi (Satyaloka)

The 18th prakaram was constructed by the Chola King Dharma Varma. There are 24 pillars inside this enclosure where Lord Ranganatha is in His reclining posture, facing South (Lanka). These 24 pillars denote the 24 letters of the Gayatri mantra, so the mandapam is known as Gayatri Mantapam.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sapthavarana Samvitha-sadana – One who resides in the temple, which consists of seven compound walls."

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Holy Name 99: Sura-poshaka

Mantra: Om Sura-poshakaya namah

Meaning – One who nurtures the demigods/devotees

Pastime – Once demon named Vikraman did severe penances and obtained a boon from the top demigod, Lord Shiva, to get the power to oppose all the demigods. After obtaining the boon, he became arrogant and like an unstoppable mad elephant, he started to attack the demigods and their abodes, demigods, who are all don't have any refuge approached Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva, they intern along with other demigods prayed for the mercy of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu, who is the supreme lord and maintainer of all the living entities, answered the prayers of the demigods, he appeared to them and as per their request, he agreed to tackle the demon Vikraman. There was combat between Lord Vishnu and Demon Vikraman, in that severe fight, Lord Vishnu easily defeated him (Demon Vikraman) much to the delight of the demigods. After that as per the request of the demigods, he reclined in the same place on the shore of River Kaveri, as Ranganatha, the reclining posture of Lord Vishnu, and the place where Lord Ranganatha reclined are north of Sri Rangam, where Supreme Lord Ranganatha already residing, to differentiate between the two abodes, this place where Lord reclined after killing demon Vikraman was got the name, Vadarangam, the abode which is north of Sri Rangam. That place where Lord resides is where River Kaveri got liberated from Sage Agastya's curse and reunited with her husband Samudra Raja. Further, as per the instruction of Lord Vishnu, the demigods bathed at the Theertham (Holy waters) in Vadarangam and got relived of their pains, which they faced due to Demon Vikraman's audacity, after which, all the demigods glorified Lord Ranganatha at Vadarangam, and left to their abodes. Later, Sage Vashista, who is a devotee of Lord Ranganatha, directed Vishwakarma to visit this place and design the temple architecture.

Then onwards, the place where Lord Ranganatha stays Vadarangam became a great place of worship, and many saints and kings rendered their service to Lordship. Once a king of Saurashtra was liberated from a serious ailment after bathing in the sacred theertham (holy waters) at Vadarangam. Pleased with this, he donated land for the chariot festival to be conducted. Many people like this got rid of their mental agony and problems in life, just by having the darshan of Lord Ranganatha, as Lord initially cleared the agony faced by the demigods.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sura-poshaka – One who nurtures the demigods/devotees," in this case, Supreme Lord Ranganatha nurtured the demigods by giving back their abodes after killing the demon Vikraman, who is giving trouble to them. Further, the saints, sages,

devotees, and kings, who visited Vadarangam and had the darshan of Lordship were also nurtured by Supreme Lord Ranganatha.

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Holy Name 100: Navaneetha Shubhahara

Mantra: Om Navaneetha Shubhaharaya namah

Meaning – One who honors the fresh butter as his delicious food

Pastime – Thiruppan Azhwar conclude his Amalanadipiran composition with the verse,

kondalvannanaik kovalanayvennai
undavayan ennullam kavarnthanai
andarkonaniyarangan ennamuthinaik
kandakankal marronrinaikkanave

Meaning: My eyes which saw Him (Lord Ranganatha), who has the form of a moisture-laden cloud, who has the mouth with which he ate butter when he appeared as a Yadava (Lord Krishna), who stole my heart, who is the Lord of the liberated living beings, who rests in Sri Rangam, which is an ornament to this world, who is the nectar to me, after seeing him, I don't wish to see anything else.

Lord Ranganatha is the personification of Lord Krishna, it is the verdict of great acharyas and azhwars, who sang compositions like that. As a result, Lord Sri Ranganatha receives all honors at Sri Rangam on Sri Jayanthi (Krishna Janmashtami) day. There will be great pomp and festivity on the day of Krishna Janmashtami, the appearance day of Lord Krishna. Mudaliyandan, the famous Acharya who oversaw the administration of the Srirangam Temple during the time of Sri Ramanuja, was a staunch believer that Lord Ranganatha is none-other than butter thief Lord Krishna and his offering and services to the deity in the same mood like offering butter, etc...

Lord Krishna being a naughty thief, always travels to the houses of gopis to steal the fresh milk, curd, butter, ghee, and other eatables, etc… This same pastime was enacted by Lord Ranganatha also, once King Upamanyu had lost all his powers due to a curse by Durvasa Muni. To get liberated from the curse is advised that King Upamanyu offer food for one lakh people in Palasavanam (the present Koviladi, Tamilnadu) every day. King Upamanyu came to Koviladi and started his Prasadam distribution service. To test him, Lord Ranganatha came in the guise of an old Brahmin. First, the old Brahmin ate all the food prepared and His hunger was not satisfied. King Upamanyu asked Him whether He would like to eat anything else. Lord Ranganatha in the disguise asked him for a pot (Kudam) full of appams (Sweet rice cakes freshly made in ghee). When King Upamanyu offered the same, Lord Ranganatha revealed his identity and removed his curse also. To show the world and also ascending to the request of King Upamanyu, Lord assumed the form of Lord Ranganatha in the very same place with the name Lord Appakudathan, who is very fond of sweet cakes. A silver pot is near the main deity of the Koviladi Temple to symbolize this legend.

Further, Lord Ranganatha married a Muslim princess. In honor of the Muslim princess, the first food offering made to Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam temple in the morning is Roti with butter.

In the Sri Rangam temple main deity of Lord Ranganatha is known as Lord Damodara Krishna, many azhwars like Periya Azhwar, sang the glories of Lord Ranganatha as Krishna, who is the butter thief. The proof is that, during the pastime of Krishna in Gokula, he was bound by Mother Yasoda to the mortar, and that mark with the welt marks from His mother tying Him up to a mortar is visible on the deity of Lord Ranganatha. That shows that he is the butter thief of Vrindavan, Lord Krishna. Acharyas and Azhwars comment that still the smell of the butter, which was eaten by Lord Krishna can be sensed from the mouth of Lord Ranganatha. The Utsavar (procession deity of Lord Ranganatha) is traditionally recognized as Lord Sri Ramachandra.

Similarly, there are many instances, which show that Lord Ranganatha is none other than Lord Krishna himself, that's why Lord Ranganatha is known as "Navaneetha Shubhahara – One who honors the fresh butter as his delicious food."

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Holy Name 101: Vihari

Mantra: Om Viharine namah

Meaning – One who always enjoys wandering or roaming

Pastime – Once an old lady from Jeeyapuram, Tamil Nadu, daily wishes to seek darshan of Lord Ranganatha, Sri Rangam, but due to distance and old age, she was unable to visit Sri Rangam from Jeeyapuram, which is located at a distance of 15 Kilometers, but passionately and consciously calls her heart out from where she was. So every afternoon she prepared curd rice and keerai (spinach), serves to her shepherd grandson, who she had named 'Ranga', and served it to him as she would do it to Lord Ranganatha (Lord Namperumal).

On a particular day, the old lady goes to serve her grandson 'Rangan' with curd rice and keerai (spinach) preparations, but she couldn't find him around. So with passion, she calls out "Ranga, Ranga" and hearing the lovely and affectionate call from his devotee 'Lord Ranga' decides to take this opportunity to attend the old lady's call and to shower her with his grace. Lord Namperumal turns up as the young shepherd Rangan, the grandson of the old lady devotee, and appears before the old lady and accepts and relishes the old lady's delicacies curd rice and keerai (spinach). Later in the evening both the old lady and grandson realize the divine play of Lord Namperumal.

Since then for centuries, Lord Namperumal visits Jeeyapuram to commemorate this transcendental pastime and even today one can witness the event of Lord Namperumal being served with Curd rice with Keerai (spinach).

This old lady devotee of Lord Ranganatha served the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha until her last breath and attained the lotus feet of Lord and went to Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu for serving him eternally.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Vihari – One who always enjoys wandering or roaming.”

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Holy Name 102: Narada-sthutha

Mantra: Om Narada-sthuthaya namah

Meaning – One who is glorified with selected prayers by Sage Narada

Pastime – Periya Azhwar in his compositions states, “Once when the sage Narada, taking a holy dip in the Ganges, worshipped a tortoise as wonderful and praiseworthy, the tortoise pointed to the river as being greater than itself. The River pointed to the ocean, the ocean to the Earth, the Earth to the mountain, the mountain to the four-faced Brahma, Brahma to the four Vedas, Vedas to the fire-Yajnas, and the Yajnas to the Supreme Lord, who is worshipped with offerings-made-with-love. That Supreme Lord Ranganatha lies reclining in the temple of Sri Rangam, where swans throng the lotus-filled waters and praise the bird-king Garuda in cooing tones.”

When Sage Narada, who is a celestial sage and devotee, sings the glories of Lord Narayana and travels across the worlds, and came across the holy abode of Sri Rangam as pointed out, he put forward the enquire to Lord Shiva, who is also a great devotee of Lord Narayana.

Lord Shiva completely explains the glories of Sri Rangam and Lord Ranganatha, “Lord Brahma was performing austerities during the beginning of creation, and Sri Rangam Vimanam emerged as a result. It remained in Satyaloka for ages and was brought to Ayodhya by king Ikshvaku. After Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, had killed the evil demon Ravana, he gave the deity, which he worshipped till then, to King Vibhishana who wanted to be with Rama. When Vibhishana passed through Sesha Peetam (Present day Sri Rangam) en route to Sri Lanka where he had become the king, the Sri Rangam Vimanam would not move from the island. So, he gave it to a local king called Dharmavarma, if the king consecrated the Vimanam to face the south cardinal direction eternally, blessing him and Lanka. Hence, it is that the deity (in a reclining posture) faces South.” Further, Lord Shiva explained the glories of the holy abode, Sri Rangam, to Sage Narada.

After hearing from Lord Shiva about the sacred abode of Sri Rangam, Narada Muni arrived at the Sri Rangam Dham and sang the glories of Lord Ranganatha with selected prayers and also worshipped the deity of Lord Ranganatha as per the procedure mentioned in the Vedic literature. Then Narada Muni, who earlier learned the system of worship known as Panachratra from Lord Narayana himself, established the proper system of worship in Sri Rangam. Lord Ranganatha very much pleased and blessed his dear devotee, Narada Muni. Further, the devotees continued their services to Lord Ranganatha as per the Panachratra system established by Narada Muni. Later, for Gautama Muni, Lord Ranganatha appears at Sri Rangapatnam, there also Narada Muni thought the Panachratra system to Gautama Rishi for worshipping Lord Ranganatha.

Later, the same Narada Muni appeared as Purandara Dasaru in the lineage of Madhva Sampradaya and he several times visited the holy abode of Sri Rangam, served the Lordship, and sang several kirtans on Lord Ranganatha and his holy

abode Sri Rangam. In this way, Sage Narada being the great devotee of Lord Ranganatha, constantly keep glorifying his beloved Lord Ranganatha.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is “Narada-sthutha – One who is glorified with selected prayers by Sage Narada.”

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Holy Name 103: Rohini-janmathara

Mantra: Om Rohini-janmatharaya namah

Meaning – One who has appeared in the constellation of Rohini star

Pastime – After cosmic delusion (Pralaya) while Lord Vishnu was sleeping in the milky ocean (Khsira Sagara) a lotus flower emerged from his navel and from that flower Brahma was born. Since Brahma wanted to have the darshan of Lord Vishnu, he started severe penance. After long years of penance, Lord Narayana appeared before him on Garuda and asked him what he wanted. Brahma requested Narayana to show him his real form. Lord Narayana replied that nobody has seen his real effulgent form, and if you want to visualize my real form, you will have to utter the Ashtakshara Mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya) in deep veneration.

At this Brahma started penance. Like this a thousand years elapsed, and at the end, the deity of Lord Vishnu appeared in a Ranga Vimanam from the Milky Ocean. Ranga Vimanam is the name given to a special chariot-like conveyance carried by Veda Murtis on their head, having the deity of Lord Ranganatha inside the Vimanam (tower). Lord Ranganatha was lying on Ananta Sesha. Lord Ranganatha along with Vimana appeared in the constellation of Rohini star, which is referred to as Lord Ranganatha’s appearance day.

In deep veneration, Lord Brahma went around the chariot four times chanting the four Vedas with his four mouths and stood before Lord Vishnu in prayerful pose representatives of all the worlds of the Universe, including Durga, Saraswati, Sapta Rishis, Navagrahas, constellations of stars and the Ashta Palakas (eight doorkeepers) and others was also in attendance. Brahma was happy to worship the Vimanam and took the Vimanam to his abode, Satyaloka, and keep worshipping the Lordship. Over time, by the divine will of Lord Ranganatha, he moved to Ayodhya and later to Sri Rangam.

On the appearance day of Lord Ranganatha, which is on the day of Dvithiya in the month of Iyppasi (Tamil Calender) when the ascendant is Rohini Star, there used to be a grand festival in Sri Rangam, till a couple of centuries before. Because the appearance day of Lord Ranganatha is considered in Revathi Star (Nakshatram) in the month of Panguni (Tamil Calendar). According to the 7th chapter of Sri Garuda Purana and the 10th chapter of Sri Brahmanda Purana, Lord Ranganatha arrived at Sri Rangam in the month of Panguni (Tamil Calender) on the day of the Revathi Star. King Vibhishana brought the deity from Ayodhya and King Sri Dharmavarma, who use to rule the province, requested Vibhishana to stay in Sesha Peetam for some time and complete the festivity. And that day, on which the deity was brought by King Vibhishana to Sesha Peetam (Sri Rangam) is on the month of Panguni (Tamil Calender) on the day of the Revathi Star.

In the Sri Rangam temple main deity of Lord Ranganatha is known as Lord Damodara Krishna, many azhwars like Periya Azhwar, sang the glories of Lord Ranganatha as Krishna, who is the butter thief. The proof is that, during the pastime of Krishna in Gokula, he was bound by Mother Yasoda to the mortar, and that mark with the welt marks from His mother tying Him up to a mortar is visible on the deity of Lord Ranganatha. That shows that he is the butter thief of Vrindavan, Lord Krishna. Acharyas and Azhwars comment that still the smell of the butter, which was eaten by Lord Krishna can be sensed from the mouth of Lord Ranganatha. The Utsavar (procession deity of Lord Ranganatha) is traditionally recognized as Lord Sri Ramachandra. Lord Krishna, who is the Supreme Lord of the entire creation, and source of all the Vishnu forms, appeared in this world on Rohini Nakshatra (Star), the same applies to the Main deity of Lord Ranganatha, who also appeared on the Rohini Nakshatra (Star) for Lord Brahma, with the Ranga Vimana. Lord Ranganatha, who is none other than Lord Krishna, the butter thief and darling of Vrindavan. So, for both the name, “Rohini-janmathara - One who has appeared in the constellation of Rohini star” will be suitable.

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Holy Name 104: Karthikeyavara-pradha

Mantra: Om Karthikeyavara-pradhaya namah

Meaning – One who gave boons to Karthikeya (Subramanya, the son of Lord Shiva)

Pastime – Thondaradipodi Azhwar sings in his Thirupalliyezhuchi composition on Lord Ranganatha, which is used in the service of his daily awakening in the morning as Suprabatha. In verse 6, he states,

Irraviar maninedun therodum ivaro
Iraiyavar padhinoru Vidaiyarum ivaro
Maruviaya mayilinanArumugan ivano,
Marutharum Vasukkallum vandu vantheendi
Puraviyodu aadalum padalum therum,
Kumarathandum pugundh eendia vellam,
Aruvarai yanai nin koilmun ivaro
Arangathamma! Palli yezhundharullaye

Meaning: Are these the twelve Adityas who have come on their huge chariots? Are these the eleven Rudras who have come on the back of bulls? Is this Murugan (Kumaran or Karthikeya) on his vehicle the peacock? Are those who are dancing and singing Maruts and Vasus? Won't this flood of demigods who have gathered outside Your temple gates which are as huge as a hill, breach it any time now? Lord Sri Ranganatha! Please wake up and bless us all.

From time immemorial to protect the Dharma and also to uphold the Truth and ascertain Dharma’s victory over Adharma, the world has been witnessing Supreme Lord Vishnu, who manifesting again and again. Sometimes for the benefit of the world, the demigods like Lord Shiva, Durga, their entourages, etc…, who are all managers of the worlds appointed by the Supreme Lord, also descend for a particular purpose, one of them is Lord Muruga, who too was born for the same purpose. The descent of Muruga is referred to as Shanmugha or Kumara Avatara, this is also one of the stories told by Sage Visvamitra to Lord

Rama and Lakshmana when he took them from Ayodhya. Lord Muruga is adoringly called Karthikeya, Kumara, Subramanya, Arumugan, and Saravanabhava. This descent was a result of the prayer of demigods to Shiva for ending the atrocity caused by the three demons (asuras) Brothers Soorapadman, Shanmughan, and Tarakan. Tarakasura got a boon that he will be killed only by Shiva's son. Tarakasura knew well that Lord Shiva, who separated from his wife Sati during Daksha Yajna, became an ascetic and engaged in his penances in the Himalayas and would not marry. The brothers obtained great powers through penance and all the demigods appealed to Shiva to help them. Then with the help of Parvati, the incarnation or reappearance of Sati, they induced Shiva and as the result, Lord Karthikeya, who is an incarnation of cupid, appeared with the special potency of Lord Shiva by which he destroyed the entire clan of demons headed by Tarakasura. Then onwards, Lord Karthikeya was appointed as the general (commander) of the demigods.

Lord Krishna himself says in Bhagavad-Gita [BG 10.24]

purodhasam ca mukhyam mam
viddhi partha brhaspatim
senaninam aham skandah
sarasam asmi sagarah

Meaning: Of priests, O Arjuna, know Me to be the chief, Brhaspati. **Of generals I am Kartikeya**, and of bodies of water, I am the ocean.

Even though with mighty power and as a duty, Lord Karthikeya executed his duty, still, he felt very bad because he killed many living entities, especially asuras (demons), who were Brahmins by nature. Being the son of Nobel Vaishnava, Lord Shiva, this nature of Lord Karthikeya is expected. So, he enquired his father about the same and asked him about the process of atonement. For which, Supreme Vaishnava, Lord Shiva, told him to meditate on Lord Vishnu (Venkateshwara) on Venkatachala hills because as per the sthala purana, the sacred hill and supreme lord absolve the sins of the greatest sinner if he repents for the same and worships the lotus feet of Lord Venkateshwara. Accordingly, Lord Karthikeya executed his penances and was blessed by Lord Venkateshwara on Venkatachala hills. Lord Venkateshwara blessed Lord Karthikeya with devotion at his lotus feet, further, he became a Shetra Palaka of Venkatachala hills.

Usually, there are two duties in the holy abodes of Lord Vishnu, which are Shetra Palaka and Dwara Palaka services. Shetra Palaka service is generally done by Lord Shiva along with his associates but under the guidance of the Lord's eternal servant, Vishvakshena. Dwara Palaka service will be done by Lord's eternal associates like Jaya and Vijaya. Being the son of Lord Shiva, Karthikeya took up the service of Shetra Palaka in Venkatachala hills along with his father, Lord Shiva. Similarly, Lord Ganesha, who is another son of Lord Shiva and also an elder brother of Karthikeya, does Shetra Palaka service in the Sri Rangam and always services the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha.

After this, being a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, Karthikeya started to travel to various holy places of Lord Vishnu. Like any other demigod especially Lord Shiva, Karthikeya visited the places of pilgrimage related to Supreme Lord Vishnu. During then, he visited the holy abode of Sri Rangam, which is guarded by his brother, Lord Ganesha, along with his father, Lord Shiva. Karthikeya is

mesmerized by the divine atmosphere of Sri Rangam and its predominating deity, Lord Ranganatha's beauty. Karthikeya served the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha along with other demigods and also engaged in the penances for the pleasure of Supreme Lord Ranganatha, pleased by the services and penances of Karthikeya, Lord Ranganatha blessed Karthikeya with several boons and also unflinching devotion at his lotus feet, which was desired by Karthikeya. Along with his brother and father, Karthikeya serves Lord Ranganatha in Sri Rangam and has darshan of Lordship often and gets his blessings.

From these incidents, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Karthikeyavara-pradha – One who gave boons to Karthikeya (Subramanya, the son of Lord Shiva)," both in Venkatachala and Sri Rangam, Supreme Lord granted the boons to Karthikeya, especially the unflinching devotion to his lotus feet. So much so that, till the end of Brahma's day (One Kapla), Karthikeya got the opportunity to stay on Venkatachala hills and render his services to the Lordship.

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Holy Name 105: Sri Rangadhipathi

Mantra: Om Sri Rangadhipathaye namah

Meaning – One who is the owner and master of Sri Rangam

Pastime – Very early in his life, Thondaradipodi (his original name was Vipra Narayanan) moved from his birth place of Thiru Mandangudi to Sri Rangam and mastered himself in the Vedas. His love and devotion for Lord Ranganatha were so enduring that he thought of none but the Lord of Sri Rangam. Dedicating his life to the service of the Lord, he created a beautiful garden inside the Srirangam temple and with a basket in hand immersed himself in collecting flowers every day and handing over the garland to the Lord. So beautiful was his Nandavanam (Garden) that, later when Thirumangai Azhwar during his renovation activity found the Nandavanam coming in the way of the huge western wall he was building, he altered the direction of the wall slightly moving it away.

Thondaradipodi Azhwar composed 55 of the most beautiful Paasurams of the Divya Prabandham. In Thiru Palli Yezhuchi, he showers 10 verses of praise on Lord Ranganatha asking him to wake up as the sun is up, flowers have blossomed, the elephant is ready, the drums are beating and his devotees are waiting for an early morning glimpse of him.

In his composition known as Thirumalai, he sings,

pachchaima malaipol meni pavalavai kamala chengan
achchutha amararere ayartham kozhundhe ennum
ichchuvai thavira yanpoy indhiralogam alum
achchuvai perineum venden arangama nagarulane!

oorilen kaniyillai; uravu matru oruvar illai
paril nin patha moolam patrilen parama moorthee
karoli vannane (en) kannane! kadharuginren
Arular kalaikan amma! arngama nagarulane!

Meaning: Oh Lord Ranganatha, who dwells in the temple of Sri Rangam. Your transcendental body looks like a huge green mountain with the lips having the hue of coral and the eyes resembling a red lotus. Oh, Achyuta (The infallible Lord), the leader of all demigods, and the darling of the cowherds (Lord Krishna). I shall not desire a position of ruling the heavenly kingdom of Lord Indra, I am relishing your transcendental name and form in this divine abode of Sri Rangam.

Oh Lord Ranganatha, who dwells in the temple of Sri Rangam. I have no place; no properties; no relatives; none other than you; I know only your Lotus feet; O Lord of blue-hued sky color! You only are my refuge. Can you not hear my cries? Is there anyone else to save me except you?

When Thondaradi Podi Azhwar sang these verses, Lord Ranganatha was very much pleased, because his devotion was so overwhelming. Lord Ranganatha very much moved and appeared to him and sanctioned the place in Vaikuntaloka, the spiritual world. But, Thondaradi Podi Azhwar was not interested in that, this was very much astonishing to Lord Ranganatha himself. Then Lord Ranganatha asked if he wishes, can stay in any lokas in this material world. But, that also Thondaradi Podi Azhwar rejected. Lord Ranganatha doesn't know, what actually Thondaradi Podi Azhwar wants. So, Lord Ranganatha asked him, to which, Azhwar responds, "Oh Ranganatha! Apart from this both the places namely the material world and spiritual world, you are having yet another place, that place I wish to live eternally." Lord Ranganatha asked, "which place it is?" Azhwar told, "It is Sri Rangam! Even though it is in the Material world, still, it is Vaikunta, the spiritual world. There I wish to live eternally and serve you. Being the master and owner of Sri Rangam, sanction me that request." Pleased by the devotion of Thondaradi Podi Azhwar, Lord Ranganatha sanctioned his request.

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sri Rangadhipathi – One who is the owner and master of Sri Rangam," like, in ordinary dealings, the owner of the house allows the tenant to stay for some time and he may extend also if he desires. Similarly, Lord Ranganatha being the owner of the holy abode, Sri Rangam, sanctioned the eternal stay for Thondaradi Podi Azhwar in Sri Rangam.

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Holy Name 106: Sri Madanga Mahanidhi

Mantra: Om Sri Madanga maha-nidhaye namah

Meaning – One who is the great treasure of Sage Matanga

Pastime – Matanga was a man who was brought up as Brahmin but was the son of a Chandala. Once he died in defense of a Brahmana. That one virtuous act effaces all his former sins. In order to obtain elevation to the position of a Brahmana, he alarmed the demigods. Indra refused to admit him. Matanga continued again for a hundred years, but still, Indra determinedly refused such an impossible request and advised him to seek some other aid. Matanga did not change his words and like this, he went on a thousand years longer, with the same result. Though dejected he did not despair but proceeded to balance himself on his great toe. He continued to do this task for one hundred years. Then he was concentrated to skin and bone. Matanga was on the point of falling and Lord Indra went to hold him. However, Lord Indra refused Matanga's request.

Indra gave him the power of moving about like a bird, change his shape at his will, and, being honored and renowned.

Later, Matanga understood that all these demigods will never be able to award him anything superior, only Supreme Lord Vishnu, who is the father of all living entities, can be approached irrespective of color, caste, and creed. So understanding this, Matanga, who started his severe penances on Lord Narayana at Mayiladuthurai Region, Lord Shiva, who is the greatest Vaishnava, requested Lord Vishnu to bless Matanga Rishi, Lord Vishnu ascending for his request, appeared to Matanga Rishi as Lord Badri Narayana form and blessed him with his desire, which is the position of the sage, even though he appeared in the family of Chandala. This is the special mercy upon living entities by Supreme Lord Narayana, by whose mercy anybody at any time can be elevated to the position of a devotee or Vaishnava (More than mere Brahmana).

After getting the special mercy of Lord Narayana, Sage Matanga continued to visit several holy places and use to perform penances on Lord Narayana. The story of Sage Matanga is mentioned in the Aranya Kandha of Ramayana. Sabari, who attained liberation through her devotion to Sri Rama, resided in this Ashram and she is a disciple of Sage Matanga. Lord Sri Rama and Lakshman stayed in the ashram of Sage Matanga during the exile period. It was due to a curse by Matanga Rishi that King Vali was unable to fight his brother Sugreeva in the Rishyamukha Mountain. Sage Matanga attained a place in Tapoloka, the holy abode of all the sages.

During the arrival of Lord Ranganatha in the holy abode of Sri Rangam, all the sages and demigods witnessed the great event. After which several sages and demigods worshipped the Lordship in the holy abode among them was Sage Matanga. Sage Matanga, who underwent severe penance to have darshan of Lord Ranganatha in person at Sri Rangam, the Lord Ranganatha was pleased by the penances of Sage Matanga appeared and blessed him with the devotional services to him, and also Sage Matanga requested Lord to grant him the opportunity to serve him at the holy abode Sri Rangam. Accordingly, Lord Ranganatha accepted the worship and services of Sage Matanga, who considered Lord Ranganatha as his heart and soul and did all the services to Lordship. That’s why Lord Ranganatha is known as “Sri Madanga Mahanidhi – One who is the great treasure of Sage Matanga,” this case is the classic example that, irrespective of color, caste, creed, etc… of one’s birth, is not an obstacle in obtaining Supreme Lord Vishnu’s lotus feet and his grace. Everyone is equal in the vision of Lord Vishnu and by following the prescribed process of devotional services, which is completely different from mundane activities or Karma Kanda or mere religious activities, one can be elevated to the level of Vaishnavas, which is far greater than the position of mere Brahmana.

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Holy Name 107: Sri Ranganatha

Mantra: Om Sri Ranganathaya namah

Meaning – One who is the Lord of holy abode, Sri Rangam

Pastime – King Kulashekara belonged to the Chera dynasty, and use to rule in the Thiruvangikulam area, which is in the present-day Kerala region. Being a very powerful warrior he soon had the Pandya and Chola regions also under his

control. He was a very virtuous and just king and endeared himself to his subjects. He was spiritually inclined and was a great devotee of Lord Rama. Lord Vishnu's padukas adorned King Kulashekara's crown known as Cheramudi. He had a special inclination to Sri Rangam, the holy abode of Lord Sri Ranganatha, who was worshipped by Lord Rama himself, that's why King Kulashekara's heart desiring to visit Sri Rangam and serve the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha and stay in Sri Rangam.

King Kulashekara longed to visit Sri Rangam and he also urged the people of his kingdom to visit the holy city of Sri Rangam. As a reminder, every day there would be an announcement of a yatra to Sri Rangam on the streets of his kingdom. Knowing the king's strong spiritual roots, the ministers used to arrange for kirtans and readings of the Ramayana in the palace and thus prevented the king from undertaking the pilgrimage to Sri Rangam. But, King Kulashekara everyday walks for some distance in Sri Rangam's direction.

However, the king started spending more time with the Vaishnava saints and devotees. This irked the ministers and therefore they devised a plan to stop the holy men from coming to the palace. They hid some of the ornaments of the royal deity worshipped by the king and told him that the ornaments had been stolen. They charged the Vaishnava devotees with theft. Kulashekar refused to believe that the Lord's devotees had stolen the ornaments. He decided to go through a test on behalf of the Vaishnavites and prove that there were innocent. He asked for a vessel with a poisonous cobra inside it. The king put his hand into the vessel and proclaimed to everyone present that if the Vaishnavites were innocent, nothing would happen to him. Sure enough, he retrieved his hand from the vessel safely. The poisonous cobra had not harmed him in the least. The ministers were stunned and shocked and revealed the truth to the king.

King Kulashekar was very unhappy and disturbed that the Lord's devotees had been falsely charged with theft. Already a renunciate within, he decided to hand over the kingdom to his son and leave for Sri Rangam. King Kulashekar was considered one of the Alwars. He composed beautiful verses in praise of the Lord and it is said that the Lord himself used to come and listen to him. He stayed for a long time in Sri Rangam and served the lotus feet of Lord Ranganatha and also the holy abode, Sri Rangam.

Later, Kulashekar Alwar visited all the sacred Vaishnava temples. His philosophy was of absolute surrender (saranagati) to the Lord. He never asked the Lord for mukti or liberation. He only longed to be a "servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord".

That's why, Supreme Lord got his name, "Sri Ranganatha – One who is the Lord of holy abode, Sri Rangam".

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Holy Name 108: Sri Ranga Parabrahma

Mantra: Om Sri Ranga Parabrahmane namah

Meaning – One who is the Supreme Brahman of Sri Rangam

Pastime – In Sri Rangam, there lived a great scholar and devotee called Parasara Bhattar, who is the successor of Sri Ramanuja and also wrote an

illuminating commentary on the Vishnu Sahasranama. He was having many disciples and he used to teach the different types of scriptures. Every day a scholar (pandit) used to walk across his house with his numerous disciples. The pandit was very learned in the scriptures and adored by everyone. Parasara Bhattar was not paying full attention to him and not talking to him much. At the same time, one poor brahmana who was a family man also used to walk by his house every day. He was not the master of any scriptures or Sanskrit. He used to collect alms from every house in his brass vessel and take it as his daily food. While doing so, he used to chant the holy names and some slokas even incorrectly sometimes. Parasara Bhattar would eagerly go to him every day and ask him about his welfare and converse with him.

Parasara Bhattar's disciples were puzzled by his behavior. They asked him, "Guru, You're not talking to that great Pandit but you're so much respecting that poor brahmana. He does not have any knowledge of scriptures, not even a single sloka. Why is it so?". Parasara Bhattar replied, "Please wait. You'll understand this tomorrow".

The next day when the Pandit passed by, Parasara Bhattar invited him into his house and offered him a seat and all respects. And then he asked him, "I've one small question please answer it. Who is the Ultimate Reality (Para tattva or Parabrahma), and what is His name?".

The pandit became nervous and said, "This is the same question for which I also don't have an answer. I thought you will ask something else. After reading all the scriptures, I'm still very much confused about Para tattva or Parabrahma." and left the place.

After some time the brahmana came. Parasara Bhattar invited him into his house and the brahmana was embarrassed that he is respected so much and nervous too. Parasara Bhattar asked the same question, "Who is the Para tattva or Parabrahma?" Immediately the brahmana became furious and threw the bowl of rice on the wall. He shouted at Parasara Bhattar, "I thought you're a great scholar. But what are you teaching your disciples without knowing the Para tattva or Parabrahma? The Lord Ranganatha who is residing in this Sri Rangam temple is the Para tattva or Parabrahma!" and left the place.

Parasara Bhattar said, "See, he is having such a clear idea of the Supreme Truth and a strong conviction. Whereas the scholar even after reading so many scriptures is not sure about the Supreme Truth. That's why I respect this Brahmana so much."

From this incident, we can understand that Lord Ranganatha is "Sri Ranga Parabrahma – One who is the Supreme Brahman of Sri Rangam."

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